

## Home and Backyard Orchid Growing

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Winter always leads to challenges for orchid growers in Northeast Florida. Last year I moved my 75+ orchids into the house with no major dilemmas. They were in every room in the house on window sills, the stairs, TV trays and stools near windows. They were in the kitchen, living room, dining room, bedrooms and office. We only ate at the dining room table for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The rest of the time it was covered with my precious warm loving orchids.



This year my collection has more than doubled, not only in quantity but size of pots and varieties. I discovered a new found passion for bare root vandas and mounted orchids. I realized that protecting my hard wood floors would be impossible, and I thought my back porch had a lot of potential.



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I started the transformation about the middle of September. Louis help me hang some poles above the windows. I made benches out of an old dog crate, landscape timbers and milk crates. I put the 3 used racks on wheels I had found last spring to good use. One holds vandas which makes it easy to push out the back door on nice or rainy days. The others hold oncidiums and a variety of big hanging pots and baskets. I have a smaller rack that I have mostly stanhopeas on, but it is more aerodynamic so it doesn't go outside if there is a chance of any gusty winds.



Even with all the racks and poles hanging space was running short. I found 2 old chain link gate that fit the bill, one for my "littles" and the other one is in my greenhouse holding my larger catt mounts. When it gets too cold out there I attach the gate to a dolly and am able to push it in and out of the garage.

Just out one of the backdoors I have a hose connection to make it easy to water everyone by either dragging the hose through for a quick or heavy watering or by filling up a 5 gallon bucket for midweek individual watering. I have 2 electric heaters that have individual thermostats. Knock on wood neither has had any problems keeping the temperature above 60 degrees over night. In the mornings I crack the windows and turn on the fans.

I still have a lot of orchids on window sills, up the stairs and in the living room and kitchen but not nearly as many as last year. This is still a work in progress there are some things that I plan on changing next year, but in the mean time I am planning where to put what when it finally warms up enough to put them all back outside.

