

Home and Backyard Orchid Growing

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Mark and Kathy Young grow their orchids in a south facing sunroom inside the home. It is a small room off the front entryway where the outside wall is mostly glass, just perfect for growing orchids.

There are a series of wire benches on which the orchids are grown with the bright light loving cattleyas and dendrobiums on the upper shelves, the mid range light oncidiums on the middle shelves and the shade loving phals and jewel orchids on the lower shelves. The area gets full sun in the mornings which orchids adore. The plants are protected from the midday sun by a large oak tree and by afternoon when the sun is in the west the area is well lit but not bright. The orchids seem to love the light conditions.

The plants are getting the day night temperature change they crave even though they are growing in a temperature controlled environment. The area warms up during the day

due to solar gain and cools off in the evenings as heat is radiated out of the glass. On cool winter nights, the door to the sunroom can be left open so heat from the main part of the house keeps the room from getting too cold and on warm summer days, the air conditioned air keeps the sunroom from getting too warm.

There are small circulating fans to move air over the leaves. The windows don't open so the plants are bathed in circulating air rather than fresh air from outdoors. Kathy's plants couldn't care less, in fact they are thriving in their indoor cocoon. Perhaps it is because the house is so open, bright and airy that the plants don't even know they're not in the great outdoors.

Kathy gets her orchids ready for Saturday night with her weekly watering and fertilizer regime. She has a 50 gallon tank in which she collects rainwater, and then brings 3 gallons indoors to make sure it's room temperature. All the plants are hauled into the laundry room for a thorough douse and then it's time for dinner. She mixes 1/4 tsp of fertilizer with 1/4 tsp of Epsom salts into a gallon of water and feeds them, weakly weekly. Kathy is using a 20-20-20 fertilizer formulation which is perfect for well water, but is considering a switch to Cal Mag fertilizer to supply necessary



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calcium to her orchids when watering with rainwater.

When the plants are in full bloom, Kathy displays them in the family room where they can be enjoyed all day. She had a beautiful Miltoniopsis in full bloom on the day of our visit, a sight to behold! She may be one of the few to be able to get this cool grower to rebloom because it won't be exposed to our summer heat.



Kathy is very selective in the plants that she brings home because her space is limited. That's her story anyhow, I see lots of opportunities for a few more beauties!