



*Phalaenopsis* (fal-e-NOP-sis)  
Moth orchid

#### DESCRIPTION

Regardless of type or size, orchid blooms

have six "petals"—actually three sepals, two petals and a third modified petal that forms a lip. In some types of orchids, such as *Paphiopedilums*, the two lower sepals are fused and appear to be a single structure.

Orchid sprays typically bear from eight to 20 blooms, and individual blossoms vary in size from approximately one-half inch wide (*Oncidium*) to 5 or more inches across (*Cattleya*). Stem lengths range from about 12 to 32 inches, depending on type of orchid.

#### COLORS

Hues vary among orchid types, but collectively, these exotic flowers are available naturally in virtually every color except blue-green and blue. Many are bicolors,

with spots or blotches on lips and/or "petals." Dyes and other color enhancements increase the range of available hues.

#### VASE LIFE

With proper care from farm to consumer, individual blooms (*Cattleyas*, *Cymbidiums*, *Paphiopedilums*, etc.) can last from four to 10 days with adequate water sources, and multibloom sprays can survive from seven days to four weeks (*Oncidiums* and *Vandas* have the shortest vase lives, seven to 14 days, while other types of cut orchids can provide two to four weeks of enjoyment at the consumer level).

#### AVAILABILITY

Most types of orchids are available year-round from sources around the world.

### vase-life extenders

**PREPARATION** Remove orchids from the shipping boxes immediately upon their arrival in your facility. If flowers cannot be attended to immediately, place shipping boxes into a floral refrigerator (a designated orchid cooler, if you have one). (See "Refrigeration," right).

#### HYDRATION AND NUTRITION

■ **Individual blooms** (*Cattleyas*, *Cymbidiums*, *Phalaenopses*, etc.): If blooms are shipped in water tubes, remove the tubed flowers from their boxes; empty the water tubes, and refill with fresh properly proportioned flower-food solution; recut the flower stems, and replace them into the water tubes; place them back into their boxes or a display apparatus; and store them upright in a floral cooler until needed or sold (see "Refrigeration," right). If blooms show any signs of wilt, recut their stems, and float them in room-temperature hydration solution for 10 to 15 minutes, to rehydrate. After removing them from the solution, gently shake off excess moisture before placing them into a cooler.

■ **Sprays** If orchid sprays are shipped in water tubes, the preferred procedure is to remove the vials from the stems; recut the stem ends, removing at least 1 inch; and

place the stems into containers with a properly proportioned flower-food solution.

If you choose to leave orchid sprays tubed, remove the tubes from the flower stems, empty any liquid, wash out the tubes with floral disinfectant solution, refill them with properly proportioned flower-food solution, recut the stem ends, and insert them back into the freshly refilled and capped water tubes.

**REFRIGERATION** There are varying opinions about the ideal storage temperatures for some types of cut orchids. Some flower care experts say that many orchids are chill sensitive, requiring storage temperatures of 55 F to 60 F, while others say most are not chill sensitive and can be stored at 33 F to 36 F.

There is agreement that some orchids can tolerate lower temperatures than others, but which types those are (other than *Cymbidiums*) and the temperature ranges are in dispute.

To make it easy for your staff, store all cut orchids at 55 F to 60 F, and sell them quickly to ensure maximum enjoyment at the consumer level.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** The effects of ethylene on orchids varies from genus to genus as well as among varieties within a genus. Some types are more sensitive (e.g., *Cymbidium*,

*Cattleya*, *Phalaenopsis*, *Vanda*) while others are less sensitive (*Dendrobium*, *Oncidium*). Additionally, orchids are less sensitive to ethylene if stored at the lower end of their preferred temperature ranges, but they become more sensitive as blooms age.

It is wise, therefore, to ensure all your orchids are treated with an ethylene inhibitor by the grower or during shipping, and keep them away from sources of ethylene in your facilities, especially fruit and other produce.

**CARE EXTRA** Avoid damaging or knocking off the anther cap, located in the throats of orchids, which covers the clusters of pollen. This causes wilting and premature death.

### purchasing checklist

- **INDIVIDUAL BLOOMS** Buy only fully open blooms (cut buds will not open), and check petals and sepals carefully for bruising; transparent, brown or dried spots; and other blemishes and discolorations.
- **SPRAYS** Purchase only orchid sprays that have at least two open blooms, and check blooms and buds for blemishes, discolorations, etc. (see "Hydration and Nutrition: Individual Blooms," left).

## fun facts

(See orchid "Fun Facts" in "Blooming Plant of the Month," on Page 17.)

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**Arachnis**

(uh-RAK-nis)

Spider orchid, Scorpion orchid



**Aranda**

(Arachnis x Vanda)

(uh-RAN-duh)



**Aranthera**

(Arachnis x Renanthera)

(uh-RAN-ther-uh)



**Cattleya**

(KAT-lee-uh)

Florist's orchid, Corsage orchid



**Colmanara**

(Miltonia x Odontoglossum x Oncidium)

(kol-man-ARE-uh)

Photo: Worldwide Orchids



**Cymbidium**

(sim-BID-ee-um)



**Dendrobium**

(den-DROW-bee-um)

Bamboo orchid, Singapore orchid, Stalk orchid



**Miltonia**

(mil-TONE-ee-uh)

Pansy orchid



**Miltoniopsis**

(mil-tone-ee-OP-sis)

Pansy orchid

Photo: Nurserymen's Exchange, Inc.



**Mokara**

(Vanda x Ascocentrum x Arachnis)

(mow-KAR-uh)

Photo: Athena's Garden / HFT International, Inc.



**Odontoglossum**

(oh-don-toe-GLOSS-um)



**Oncidium**

(on-SID-ee-um)

Dancing lady orchid



**Paphiopedilum**

(paf-ee-oh-PED-i-lum)

Lady's slipper orchid, Lady slipper orchid, Slipper orchid



**Phalaenopsis**

(fal-e-NOP-sis)

Moth orchid

Photo: Silver Vase, Inc.



**Vanda**

(VAN-duh)



**Vuylstekeara**

(Odontoglossum x Miltonia x Cochlioda)

(vul-steek-ee-ARE-uh) **sfr**