



AUSTRALIAN NATIVE DENDROBIUM ORCHIDS

Australian Dendrobium orchids occur in the wild along the East Coast from Tasmania to Cape York Peninsula and across into the north of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. These epiphytic orchids (they grow on trees in the wild) vary in size from the spectacular *speciosum*, through *kingianum* to *bigibbum*, *linguiforme* and *teretifolium*.

Dendrobiums prefer shade house conditions, where they receive good light, free air circulation, and sufficient moisture. Shade cloth of 70% rating is good for Dendrobiums.

GROWING MEDIA: For small plants in up to 100mm pots, a mixture of 5-8mm bark and marble chips works very well. For larger plants the grade of bark can be increased to 10-12mm, and very large plants, especially *speciosums* can use around 25-30mm bark. The essential factor necessary for good healthy growth is that it is an open mix thus allowing air to the roots and good drainage.

WATERING: During Winter the rain should suffice unless an extending period of dry weather occurs. In Summer do not let the plants dry out. It may be necessary during hot spells to water every day; small plants perhaps several times daily. Native Dendrobiums also appreciate a misting during warmer weather. This raises the humidity around the plants. Use some moisture retaining material underneath benches and water this down regularly. This will also increase the humidity.

FERTILIZING: Slow release fertilizers can be used every three months. If using other fertilizers in powder or liquid form that are mixed with water, always use half strength and there is less likelihood of burning the plants. Use fortnightly. The best time for fertilizing is the growing season.

DIVIDING OR RE-POTTING: The best time for re-potting is in early spring when new growth is just starting to show. After examining the plant for dead roots, dead pseudobulbs, flower stems, etc., you need to decide whether you are going to pot the plant on into a larger pot, divide it into two or more plants, or create a new growth arrangement in a new pot. When selecting a pot you should allow for two years growth. Use the smallest pot possible; Do not overpot.

When a plant that is healthy and growing well has become too large for its pot, it can be transferred to a larger pot by placing the whole contents into the new pot without touching the old medium or roots. This is called Potting On and can be done at anytime of the year. Only pot on if the bark or mix is still on good condition and consider a full repot with new mix within 1-2 years.

Most Dendrobiums are amenable to slab culture.



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