

## **ORCHID - PAPHIOPEDILUM**

Paphiopedilums or Lady's Slipper, are very easy to grow. They remain compact in their growth habit and have attractive foliage with long lasting flowers in a wide range of colors. Although classed as terrestrials, they do not really grow "in the ground". Rather they grow in a layer of decaying vegetation found on the forest floor. It is helpful to know where an orchid grows in nature so that we can more easily duplicate these conditions in our home or greenhouse.

**TEMPERATURE:** Paphs have a very wide range of temperature requirements. For best growth, we suggest 55-60 degree night temperatures and 10-15 degrees warmer during the day. If you are comfortable, your plants will be too. It is important for Paphs to have a day-night temperature differential to initiate bud spikes. Air circulation helps to prevent fungal and bacterial problems by insuring the foliage is dry by nightfall.

**LIGHT:** Paphiopedilums are known to adapt readily to different light intensities. Although they will grow with a low light intensity (900-1500 foot candles), a stronger light will produce much better growth and flower production.

**WATER:** Paphs like to be evenly moist at all times, not soggy. During warmer months water every three to four days and in cooler weather once a week or so. The biggest problem that can arise from under watering is salt buildup in the potting mix. As with all other container plants, always water thoroughly, allowing water to run out the bottom of the pot. Never allow your plants to stand in water. Roots require air as well as water to remain healthy. Humidity around 50-70% is ideal.

**FERTILIZER:** Paphs are very light feeders. A light feeding every two weeks should be enough. Because paphs are very salt-sensitive it is important to never feed a dry plant. Of course your paphs should never be allowed to completely dry out in any case. Foliar feeding with a diluted mixture of a balanced fertilizer in a spray bottle works very well.

**POTTING:** Paphs require a fine, but water-retentive mix such as a cymbidium mix. This would consist of small fir bark mixed with perlite and charcoal. Smaller or younger plants should be potted annually, while mature, larger plants can be left for every other year. As the plants remain fairly compact, pot them with enough room for two years growth.