

Lacaste Orchid

The Lycaste orchid produces large, showy triangular flowers that are waxy and long-lasting. The plants are distinctive for their roundish bulbs and broad, pleated leaves. Two cultural groups are generally recognized – The evergreen skinneri type, that flowers form leafy pseudobulbs, and the deciduous aromatica type, that flowers form leafless pseudobulbs. Culture for the hybrid genus Angulocaste (Lycaste X Anguloa) follows the culture for the Lycaste parent.

LIGHT:

Light requirements vary. Deciduous species prefer light conditions as for cattleyas or 4-5 hours of direct sun. More light is usually provided as new growths form pseudobulbs. Evergreen species prefer less light.

TEMPERATURE:

Temperature for the evergreen species should be fairly constant and never hot. Nights of 52 to 58 degrees F and days of 65 to 78 degrees F are desirable. The deciduous species of Lycaste can tolerate a wider range, up to 95 degrees F during the day and down to 50 degrees F night when dormant in the winter.

WATER AND SOIL:

Water should be applied in larger amounts during active growth (usually summer) than when the plants are not producing new leaves and pseudobulbs. The potting medium should just begin to dry out before watering. Deciduous species should be kept almost completely dry when leafless. Evergreen species should be kept only slightly drier than normal after pseudobulbs form. Water should be kept off the leaves, and especially out of new growths, to prevent rot or leaf spotting.

Potting is best when new growth starts, usually in spring. A fine-grade potting medium is often used; fir bark and perlite (2:1) is a common, well-drained mix. When repotting, split plants into no less than two bulbs per pot and choose a pot to allow for two years of growth. The bottom one quarter to one third of the pot should be filled with drainage material, either broken crock, rocks or Styrofoam “peanuts”. The plant should be positioned in the pot, allowing the maximum number of new growths without crowding the pot. Spread the roots over a cone of potting medium and fill in around the roots with potting medium to the junction of the roots and the pseudobulbs. Firm the medium well around the roots by applying pressure. Keep humidity high and the potting medium on the dry side until new roots form. A vitamin B1 compound (plant Starter) may help establish newly potted plants.

HUMIDITY:

Humidity should be maintained at 40% to 70%. Deciduous species need less humidity when dormant. Brisk air circulation will help prevent damage to leaves by leafspot fungi.

FERTILIZER:

Fertilizer should be applied regularly and heavily when plants are actively growing. A high nitrogen formulation (30-10-10) is recommended during active growth (usually summer). Some growers top-dress the potting medium with blood meal as new pseudobulbs form. In fall, or as growths mature and pseudobulbs are produced, fertilizer is reduced and/or switched to a high phosphorus (10-30-20) formulation to stimulate flower production.