

Orchid Cactus

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Orchid Cactus has no spines, but has stems, that bear flowers. They differ from desert cacti by preferring more shade and richer soil. Flowering cacti come in countless color variations. Some are bi-colored and quite iridescent. The flowering Cacti available today are much more robust than they used to be. The newer hybrids have stronger root structures and have a long life span, great for porch and patio use in the summer.

LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE:

They thrive in a bright spot, in direct sunlight. In spring and summer they can tolerate considerable warmth. During the winter rest period, keep them at approximately 60-62 °, up to 90° in summer. They require 3-5 hours of direct sun.

WATER AND SOIL:

Soft water is best for these Cacti. Water more, February thru August during growth cycle. Reduce watering October thru January, giving plant only enough water to prevent leaves from withering. Orchid cacti thrive on good compost mixed with sphagnum and sand or perlite. Repotting is best done in summer, about two weeks before beginning to water and feed again. Let soil dry between waterings.

FERTILIZE:

When the plant has rested a little after flowering, feed it twice a month with liquid plant food. If flowering was sparse, use a fertilizer rich in phosphates, 10-50-10.

PROPAGATION:

Propagate the cactus from well-developed stalks of about 2-4 inches. Dry them out a bit. Plant in slightly moistened soil. Water only when dry.

COMMENTS:

Bud drop: This may occur if the cactus is moved or turned during the budding period. Don't disturb the cactus during this time. It can also be due to a low light level.

Rot at the bottom of the stem: This is particularly liable to occur if you let your cactus get too cold and damp. Some orchid cactus hybrids have a very frail root system, so take care not to over water, especially in the winter.