

Zygopetalum Orchids

General Comments

The approximate 18 species of the very fragrant and easy to grow Zygopetalum genus fall in the general category of “soft leaf” orchids because of their leathery, strap – like leaves. These extraordinary orchids produce brightly colored flowers of greens, purples, burgundy, and raspberry shades in various exotic patterns. The blossoms have a fragrance reminiscent of the heavy perfume of a Hyacinth or Narcissus.

Light

Light is the most important factor to produce flowering in these orchids. Although they want lots of light, they do not want to be exposed to direct sun. Light in an east facing window gives excellent results. Watch the leaves and they will tell you if you have the right amount of light. Be careful when adjusting your light exposure because the leaves will burn very easily if over-exposed. The leaves should be light green. Dark leaves are a sign of too little light, while yellowish green leaves are a sign of too much light. They should do well in the home in a bright window but away from direct sun.

Watering

Zygopetalums loves water in summer, lots of water, but do not allow the roots to soak in standing water. Water thoroughly at least once or even twice a week to keep them moist. The amount of water will depend on the temperature and media. If the tips start to die back and turn black, this could be a sign of heavy buildup of salts from the water and fertilizer. Zygopetalum roots are very sensitive to excessive salt buildup. To avoid this problem, be sure that the water flows freely out of the pot during watering. Doing this will wash out excess salts in the media and prevent buildup in the first place. Cut back on the watering in the winter, but never let your Zygopetalum dry out. Your orchid will also enjoy overhead misting between watering as long as the leaves are dry by nightfall.

Humidity

A humidity level of at least 60% is needed for all soft-leaf orchids. To create the required humidity around your orchid, place it on a pebble tray or use a room humidifier.

Potting

Never allow your plant to become pot bound. When your plant fills its pot, it is time to give it a new home. This should happen every two or three years. The best time to repot is right after it has finished blooming. When you repot, it is a good time to take divisions if you want to increase the number of your plants.