

Zygopetalum Alliance

Growing Zygopetalum Orchids in the Toowoomba area

General

Zygopetalum Orchids come from the South American Continent with most species growing in the higher altitudes of Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. In these locations they are found at altitudes varying from 500m to 1400m which gives a clue to their suitability in our region.

Often the first thing noticed about these beautiful orchids is their fragrance which is worth growing them for this reason alone.

Light

Zygopetalum Orchids need a good location with plenty of light and air movement. Full sun should be avoided in summer as this will damage the plant. Shadecloth coverage or dappled shade to the extent of 50% to 70% shade is ideal. Again pale green or yellowing of the leaves indicates too much light while dark green leaves is evidence of insufficient light.

Temperature

Temperatures above 30° may not be favoured by Zygopetalums but with sufficient shading and moisture, little effect will be observed, in fact temperatures as high as 35° for short periods is tolerated. During such heat wave conditions, a spray of water on the ground in the vicinity of the plants will give some relief as will air movement either natural or provided by mechanical means. Don't water the plants during the heat of the day during these periods. As Zygopetalums have large flat leaves they are somewhat susceptible to frost damage and some protection should be afforded them during the coldest winter period.

Watering

The frequency of watering your Zygopetalums will depend on a few factors such as temperature, air movement and potting media. They like to be moist at all times so watering could vary from daily in summer to as much as fortnightly in winter. Watering in the evening in the hotter months is beneficial. Water well with each watering and ensure water is flushing through the pot.

Fertiliser:

Good balanced water soluble fertilisers are very effective and can be used regularly. The strength of fertiliser should reflect the plants growth rate. Stronger at peak growing times and less when growth slows. Half recommended strength is a good place to start. Most Zygos flower between Autumn and Spring so fertilising in this period can be reduced as growth also slows.

Potting Media:

Potting mix needs to be well aerated and free draining but still remain damp for a reasonable period. A good quality Cymbidium potting mix is quite suitable and could consist of pine bark, coco chips and perlite in roughly equal quantities. Repotting should be carried out after flowering. The plant can be divided with some of the back bulbs removed or simply moved into a larger pot. Back bulbs can often be coaxed into providing a new shoot by trimming off old roots and potting up into a small pot with fresh mix.

Pests and Diseases:

Zygopetalums are susceptible to insect pests such as scale and mealy bugs. These pests can be controlled with Rogor or Confidor in conjunction with Echo Oil. They are also troubled by a fungus that causes unsightly black spots on the leaves. This can often be controlled by a fungicide such as Mancozeb but while the spots look unsightly they do not appear to harm the plant. Some plants appear to be more susceptible than others. Good air movement at all times can also reduce this nuisance. Keeping the plants drier in the cold winter months also reduces any potential fungal or bacterial attacks.

Overall some basic care and a little effort can produce great results in growing these amazing orchids. Good luck and happy growing.

Disclaimer: These notes are supplied in good faith and Toowoomba Orchid Society Inc and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.

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