



CATLEYAS (SUMMER)

THIS IS THE WAY I GROW ORCHIDS IN THE SUMMER

As we all have our own ideas on how to grow our orchids, these notes are purely my own way of growing the beautiful cattleyas (Queen of Orchids).

My orchid house is tunnel shaped with 2" polypipe ribs and is covered with Solar Weave and 70% biscuit coloured shade cloth which has been up for 11 years so probably only gives me 60 to 65% protection now. Before the hot conditions came I put up another lot of 70% green shade cloth. I put it through the ribs inside the orchid house and pull it down so it drapes between the ribs. I believe this will give more ventilation. The ends of my orchid house are shade cloth only so get the benefit of any breeze or winds. Having the solar weave on permanently gives me complete control over watering, Winter and Summer, which I prefer. Cattleyas do not like to be saturated all the time but like to dry out a little (not totally) between watering.

We have been experiencing very warm to hot conditions so in between watering them thoroughly I also water the floor of the orchid house and lightly mist the plants. ALWAYS in the early morning before 8am if the weather forecast is for hot conditions. This will help to give them some humidity during the day. I do not have fans so I always water in the morning right through the year. This ensures my cattleyas, bark and floor are totally dry by sundown. Because I don't have fans I believe this method helps to prevent fungal problems occurring. I also make sure after watering that no water remains in the 'cup' of new growth as this will cause rot on very hot days. I carry with me some cotton wool buds /tissues to prevent this but even with care, sometimes it happens. I try to water them on a sunny day with a breeze if possible.

If humidity has been very high for prolonged periods, I mix Mancazeb (according to directions) in five litres of water and spray thoroughly, especially under leaves. I use Eco Oil if I notice scale on certain plants then spray again 7 – 10 days later to catch hatching eggs etc. I don't spray all plants only those affected as the oil only kills on contact so what is the point, it's a waste. I don't mix Mancazeb with Eco Oil as it is now thought that the oil inhibits the efficiency of the Mancazeb. I have stopped mixing these two items together. I NEVER use oils on hot days as this may burn the leaves. Personally, I won't use oil when temperatures are over 27 degrees. If you do not have a solid roof and it rains heavily, you may have to spray again.

After flowering I wait until new growth is a reasonable length before repotting. (I never repot if there is a sheath as this may result in the sheath dying or producing a deformed flower). Also I repot when roots grow over the edge of pot. I try to work it so the roots are about a length that will fit easily into a new squat pot without being damaged. These exposed roots are an invitation for cockroaches to eat the green growing tip. At about 10 centimetres the roots are long enough to give some stability into new bark but I also stake as well to prevent any movement.

I feed every week using different fertilizers but alternate with organic feeds. This way I believe they get all the nutrients they require for strong, healthy growth. Fertilizers can only be taken up through the leaves early morning and evening when the stomates under leaves are open. They close during the day to conserve moisture.

Sylvia Hawkins February, 2014

