



Trowel Talk!

January 2018

Keeping Your Orchid Happy

Has a friend given you a *Phalaenopsis* orchid as a special gift and you are not sure how to look after it?



Phalaenopsis

Photo: Kelly Noel

Moth orchids (*Phalaenopsis* spp.) are very popular and are available from greenhouses and flower shops, as well as major chains and grocery stores. They have a rosette of broad oval stiff leaves at their base and, when in bloom, a long arching stem with a row of flattened white, purple, pink or yellowish-green flowers. The blooms can last for four to six months or more under the right conditions.

Phalaenopsis grow best in an east window but can grow in a south or west window provided there is some

shade. They should not have direct sunlight for very long, otherwise the leaves will burn, particularly in winter when the sun is low.

The temperature needs to be above 16 °C at night and between 20 °C and 30 °C during the day.

Water and humidity are critical for *Phalaenopsis*. Because they have little water storage ability except in their leaves, they should never completely dry out. Water them by soaking the medium (usually bark chips) in a dish or bowl of room-temperature water for an hour or so, and then let them drain. Do not water again until they are nearly dry, up to ten days in the winter to as short as two days in the summer. Water in the morning so the leaves can dry before nightfall to prevent rot. The plants also need humid air, which can be provided by setting the plant in a tray of gravel, partially filled with water. Elevate the plant so it does not sit in the water.

Sometimes orchids are bothered by scale insects or mealy bugs. These insects can hide in crevices. If seen, spray or wipe them off with a cotton swab soaked in a soap solution (50 millilitres (mL) dish soap in 1 litre (L) of water with a few mL of rubbing alcohol). Repeat if necessary with the soap solution.

When plants are actively growing, they should be fertilized about twice a month with a high nitrogen fertilizer such as 30-10-10. To promote blooming, usually in late winter, switch to a high phosphorus fertilizer such as 10-30-20. If the plant

does not show signs of blooming, move it to a location where it gets more light.

Once the blooms have faded and if the plant is healthy, cut the blossom stem to the nearest node and it may reflower. Otherwise cut the entire stem off and let the plant rest.



Phalaenopsis

Photo: Monique Paré

After several years, the plant will need repotting. Remove the old potting medium from the roots, trim off any soft or rotten roots, place the plant over new medium in a pot so the basal rosette of leaves sits on top of the bark. Tie the plant to a stake until the roots are firmly anchored. Try not to damage the aerial roots.

Phalaenopsis is one of the most beautiful and rewarding orchids to grow in the home.

Diane McClymont Peace
Master Gardener

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton
- <http://mgottawa.ca>
- Vol 9, number 1
- Editorial team—Josie Pazdzior, Amanda Carrigan, Judith Cox, Kelly Noel, Susan Bicket, Rob Stuart
- newsletter@mgottawa.ca

Thank you

MaryAnn for your hard work producing Trowel Talk for the last 8 years. An excellent job!

January To Do

-Pile snow on top of troughs and tender plants to protect them when the inevitable thaw comes.

-Go through leftover seeds from last year to see which ones are still good and what you need to order for this year.

-Check bulbs and tubers in storage to make sure they're not too dry or too damp.

-Check houseplants for pests and diseases.

-Ask a Master Gardener if you have questions on gardening or plant ID.

Tip of the Month

There's nothing like the look and smell of a real tree for Christmas. What do you do with it after the holidays? Some municipalities, including Ottawa, will pick up trees after Christmas and bring them for chipping or composting. If that option isn't available, you can use it to provide shelter and protection in the garden. Saw it into rings or branches, and prop the pieces around and over plants, especially broad-leaved evergreens and tender plants, that will benefit from additional snow cover and wind protection. Evergreen branches also make a good deterrent to cats, dogs, and chickens that may be trying to scratch in the garden. If you have the space, putting the tree (whole or chopped in pieces) in a pile somewhere provides shelter and protection to small birds and animals.



Shrubs in winter

Susan Bicket

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton



Where to find us for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034—Wednesday and Thursday 1–3 pm (all year)

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca - monitored daily
send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

No clinics are scheduled until next spring.

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

January 16 – 7:30pm

Your Own Trees

Lee Boltwood, Master Gardener

Pretty Street Community Centre, 2 Pretty St., Stittsville

Hosted by Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society (no guest fee)

February 6, - 7:30pm

Going Grassless: Honey I Shrunk the Lawn

Julianne Labreche, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata Kanata March Horticultural Society

February 10 – TBA

Thugs, Bullies and Sneaks: Plants to be Wary of

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Almonte Seedy Saturday—9:00am to 3:00pm

Almonte Civitan Hall, 500 Almonte Road Almonte Ontario

Free to the general public

February 14 – 7:30pm

Flowers with Vegetables

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Larkin House, 76 Larkin Drive. Barrhaven

Hosted by Barrhaven Garden Club (Guest fee \$5)

February 15 – 7:30pm

Edibles in the Garden

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

City View United Church, 6 Epworth Avenue, Nepean

Hosted by Nepean Horticultural Society (Guest fee \$4)

March 6 – 7:30pm

From Shade to Sun: Converting a Garden

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata

Hosted by Kanata March Horticultural Society (guest fee \$5)

March 10 - 1:00pm

Thugs, Bullies and Sneaks: Plants to be Wary of

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Canada Blooms Enercare Centre Exhibition Place 100 Princess Blvd., Toronto

Talk is free with the price of admission to the show

March 12 – 7:00 pm

The Art of Rock gardening

Robert Stuart, Master Gardener

Old Fire Hall, 260 Sunnyside Ave

Old Ottawa South Garden Club guest fee \$7



For more information on Master Gardeners, visit us at: <http://mgottawa.ca>