

Species of the Month

August 2004

Greater Las Vegas Orchid Society



Dendrobium Judy Mezey

Dendrobium phalaenopsis

Can Produce Tall Evergreen Free Blooming Hybrids

Easy growing *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* hybrids can commonly be purchased in grocery stores and many chain stores like Home Depot. A large percentage of the hybrid parentage can be attributed to *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* and other similar species making their cultural requirements very similar to the Northern Australia natives. The semiarid regions where they grow typically have a temperature range between 43°F to 100°F (however the recorded lows are usual not lower than 70°F) with very little seasonal variation. They like a dry rest period between flowering which seems to help promote new growth. The new growths can rot very easily and care should be taken while watering, keeping water off the new growths until they are 3 to 4 inches tall. The plants can be up to 48 inches tall which tends to make them top heavy and in need of staking. Generally, these hybrids are not good candidates for specimen culture as they tend to only produce one growth at a time and after several seasons of blooming the back bulbs die back. Each growth can produce 1 to 4 spikes that appear from nodes near the apex over several years even on leafless stems. The arching pendant inflorescence produce as many as 20 long lasting flowers per spike. Once these plants are established they can be in constant bloom!

LIGHT

3000—4500 foot-candles; high light, winter light higher due to summer cloud cover.

TEMPERATURE

Warm to Intermediate; 55°F min. to 90°F. Warmer night temperatures above 60°F are best.

WATER

Water thoroughly and heavily while actively growing. The roots like to dry rapidly and thoroughly after watering. During active growth the plants will tolerate a moist medium; nevertheless, it is a good idea to let the plants dry out between waterings.

HUMIDITY

70% is preferred, lower in winter.

POTTING

Require excellent drainage. Pots or baskets with very coarse, open fast draining medium that allows roots to dry rapidly. Use as small a pot as possible. Coarse size fir bark is okay. Clay pots are ideal since the tall plants tend to be top heavy. Staking the taller growths may be necessary. The plants may also be mounted. Repot only when new roots are starting to grow for best results.

FERTILIZER

1/2 recommended strength applied weekly while plants are actively growing, less in winter if the temperatures are low; however this plant can grow year round. They are heavy feeders!