

**Peel Region Orchid Society of Western Australia Inc.**

**PO Box 1303, Mandurah WA 6210**

**CULTURAL NOTES – CATTLEYAS**

**Compost:** An open media of wood bark through which water passes easily.

Many growers use perlite as the basis of their media for Cattleya mix (5 parts bark to one part perlite).

**Shade:** Cattleyas should be grown with as much light as possible, but not so much that the leaves become yellow and burnt.

During the summer 70% shade should be sufficient. For better growing conditions, Amperlite (Pearl, not clear) is used for housing the Cattleyas.

**Containers:** Cattleyas are grown in plastic pots and sit on weld mesh benches, between 30cm to 90cm above the ground. The floor is covered with woodchips or crushed brick to hold moisture in the hot summer.

**Re-potting:** As with most Cattleyas, re-potting is best carried out when the roots first appear from the base of the new growths, of each division. Re-pot every two years so the medium does not sour, but more frequently if the plants require it.

**Watering:** Water fairly heavily during the hotter summer months – eg. Early in the mornings to allow the mix to dry out before nightfall.

On extremely hot days, it may be necessary to 'mist' the growing area to build-up humidity. Ideal humidity is between 50-80%.

During the cooler months watering can be reduced so the plant mix is just moist.

The plants require a definite rest after flowering so therefore do not require fertilising during this period.

**Fertilising:** With the onset of spring, feed them once a week with a High Nitrogen fertiliser (with Johnson's formula) until mid summer, the switch to a high phosphorous fertiliser, every two weeks to aid flower spike production. By adding half a teaspoon of Hoof and Horn Meal, to the top of the medium when re-potting and repeating every six months, is also beneficial.

**Johnson's Formula**

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1. Using a 5ml spoon, add 2 level spoons of Magnesium (Epsom Salts) to one litre of water and dissolve. Place solution in a bottle and label it Solution A
2. Using the same 5ml spoon, add 1 level spoon of Chelated Iron Powder to one litre of water and dissolve. Place solution in a bottle and label it Solution B.
3. Make the required amount of High Nitrogen fertiliser  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  the recommended dilution rate. (Try both dilution rates to find out which suits your needs.
4. Add to every litre of fertiliser, 15mls each of Solutions A and B.

### **NOTES ON CATTLEYAS – PROBLEMS AND CAUSES**

#### ***Shrivelling of bulbs & leaves***

1. Over watering – in which case roots to be rotted and the foliage dull looking and possibly yellowish.
2. Under watering – leaves may be yellow, but roots will probably be white and healthy.
3. Compost soured or broken down with consequent root rot.

#### ***Yellowing of Foliage***

1. Excessive sun light
2. Poor drainage, usually allied with souring of compost, sometimes caused by over fertilising or a build up of salts contained in our hard mains water.
3. Over watering causing root rot.

#### ***Buds damping off***

1. Lack of air movement – poor ventilation.
2. Humidity too low.

#### ***Bulbs failing to produce sheaths and buds***

1. Shock from re-potting or dividing, particularly if carried out at the wrong time.
2. Insufficient drop in temperature at night – a variation of at least 10°C is desirable; night temperature should be below 20°C
3. Lack of sunlight
4. Too much light at night

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5. Over fertilising or using a fertiliser which is too high in nitrogen, causing too many weak new growths.
6. Potting medium which has soured or broken down.

***Weak neck on blooms***

1. Over watering
2. Weakness could be inherited.

***Short lived blooms***

1. Poor ventilation.
2. Low humidity.
3. Excessively high night temperatures.

Plant which appears healthy but not progressing.

1. New root tips being constantly trimmed by garlic snails.

Spotting of blooms

1. Excessive humidity – especially at night.
2. Insufficient drop in ventilation and air movement.
3. Sudden drop in temperature at night.
4. Droplets of water splashed on open blooms cause burn marks when sun rays are cast on the flowers during the day and water dries or is evaporated.