

HOW TO GROW

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE TERRESTRIAL ORCHIDS

These notes have been specifically prepared to assist you as a new grower of Australian terrestrial orchids. The word “terrestrial” means growing in the ground. Many people are surprised to learn that hundreds of species of Australian native orchids may be found growing as terrestrials, ranging from the most northern tip of Australia, all the way south to Tasmania.

A major objective of the Society is conservation through cultivation and, to this end, members make available tubers of terrestrial orchids through the Tuber Bank each year, around November and December. Pots of terrestrials are also available from the Sales Table at the Society’s monthly meetings.

NATIVE ORCHIDS ARE PROTECTED PLANTS. IT IS ILLEGAL TO TAKE THEM FROM THE WILD.

Growing media must be open, well-drained, contain some organic material for food and be able to retain enough moisture to avoid drastic soil moisture fluctuations. A basic mixture can be made up from:

- 2 parts coarse sand
- 1 part mountain soil (rich loam)
- 1 part buzzer chips (coarse saw dust)
- 1 part leaf mould.

Ensure the components are damp (not wet) before combining for this makes the mix much easier to work with.

Plastic pots are best for growing terrestrial orchids and the 10cm to 15cm size pot, with plenty of holes in the base, will drain well and yet not dry out too quickly.

Up to 20 tubers may be placed in a 15cm pot. Easy to grow species such as *Pterostylis nutans* and *P. curta*

can be grown successfully in basic commercial potting mix. Species such as *Caladenia*, *Diuris* and *Glossodia* are more difficult. Any person interested in cultivating these is advised to consult experienced growers.

Terrestrials can be housed successfully in a bush house or a cool glasshouse with ample air movement. They can even be grown sheltered on the eastern side of a fence, or under trees. Approximately 50% shade is adequate for most species.

The usual life cycle of terrestrials is for active growth from autumn to late spring and, during this time, watering should be sufficient to keep the plants moist. During the summer (dormant period), watering is reduced to a light sprinkling every few weeks. This low level of watering should be just sufficient to stop the underground tubers from shrivelling or dehydrating.

Most of the easy to grow terrestrials reproduce vegetatively and will need repotting annually. This should be done early in the dormant season just after the leaves have browned and died back (November to January). At repotting time, half of the old mix should be discarded and replaced with fresh mix.

Pests such as slugs and snails should be eliminated by squashing or baiting. Aphis and grubs can be controlled by applying appropriate sprays.

A comprehensive book, *Cultivation of Australian Native Orchids*, is available from the Society for a small price. It contains detailed information on how to grow most of the commonly available orchids.

New members and visitors are always welcome at the Australasian Native Orchid Society.

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