

Orchids' Natural Environment

Orchids in the wild are either epiphytic (tree dwelling), lithophytic (rock or cliff faces) or terrestrial (ground dwelling).



The Ironbark orchid is epiphytic

Epiphytes use trunks and branches of the host tree as a means of securing some filtered sunlight through the forest canopy, moisture, and falling nutrients. These orchids attach themselves to the host with porous root systems. However, they are not parasites.

Lithophytic orchids are usually found on cliff faces, rocky ridges and outcrops, or creek boulders. Invariably they germinate in places supplying varying degrees of shade and moisture. Those growing in exposed positions usually exhibit yellowish leaves. The larger rock dwelling orchids, such as *Dendrobium speciosum* for example, have such strong and expansive root structures that often soil is mixed among the other trapped forest debris supplying the plant with nutrients.

It is important to observe an orchid's choice in the wild, in order to maximise the plant's chances of surviving and flourishing under cultivation. *Dendrobium speciosum*, for example, is both a lithophyte and epiphyte. Some plants in southern Queensland colonise the upper branches of native Hoop Pine; sometimes up to 25 metres above ground. On the mid north coast of New South Wales these plants are happy to grow on boulders above creek beds where the filtered light is sparse and consequently their leaves are dark green.



Dendrobium speciosum – lithophytic & epiphytic

Some terrestrial species and each of the three native species of cymbidium orchids have a special relationship with rotting timber. The roots of these orchids enjoy the benefit of the fungus present in the timber or earth. This relationship is known as mycorrhiza and in cultivation it is preferable to replicate this condition in the careful use of appropriate potting media.

Photo of native
cymbidium on log

In order to determine the classification or habitat of an orchid you have purchased, we suggest you either consult the leading work on native orchids by David L Jones *Native Orchids of Australia*, or telephone John Brogan at Brogan Garden Service (02 9858 3985 or 0419 279 716) who will be happy to assist.

Orchid Care

Basic care requirements for native epiphytic and lithophytic orchids are as follows:

- Avoid exposure to frost, by either keeping the plant on a semi-indoor veranda during the winter months, or ensuring your shade house is covered with 50% shade-cloth on both the top **AND** sides. Frost not only falls but moves transversely, particularly where there is minute air movement overnight.
- Spray the plant with water (or use a mister) for a few minutes each morning. In the hotter months an afternoon spray would be beneficial.
- The plant should enjoy an environment where it is protected from direct sunlight, and is allowed, at some stage during the day, to dry out.
- The most critical part of an orchid plant is its root structure. If the roots are healthy then the plant will flourish given the correct care and appropriate environment.
- Insect pests abound, but a simple approach is to take these three steps:
 - (a) grow a *Leptospermum liversidgei* near your shade house. This plant discourages pests;
 - (b) if snails and slugs are a problem, leave a saucer or two, half filled with beer, on the ground near where they congregate. They will drown in the beer;
 - (c) aphids are an enemy of native orchid blossom buds. They will suck out the goodness from a developing flower spike and destroy the very essence of the plant's attractiveness. To counter aphids, spray lightly with a pyrethrin based insecticide as directed, but **DO NOT** use any preparation containing white oil. White oil clogs, and inhibits, the functions of orchid roots.

Photo of terrestrial orchid

Terrestrial orchids form miniature potato like bulbs in the potting media. Seasonally they produce leaves and usually a single flower spike, while some species produce only a leafless flower spike. These plants should be potted in a mix of peat moss, fine and coarse sand, and finely chopped aged eucalyptus mulch or pine bark. When the leaves and flower spike die away the small bulbs may be uncovered and re-potted for next season.

If you require a show-class plant then it is preferable to grade the bulbs according to size. For example, a small pot of 5 or 6 similarly-sized bulbs should produce 5 or 6 flower spikes of even height.

Terrestrials require the same treatment as the other natives, so far as care and pests are concerned. Be particularly careful though, of grubs which attack developing flower spikes.

Our Orchids

Brogan Garden Service is licensed to salvage damaged and exposed plants due to legitimate forestry operations. Due to concern for the wild environment, NSW and Queensland State Forest Departments take care to log only those areas of timber producing forest that do not result in threatened fauna and sensitive flora being damaged. For example, we are not permitted to remove plants from riparian (creek bed) areas or from forest segments isolated for the protection of specific species of fauna.

Some of the orchids offered by Brogan Garden Service have been salvaged from forest areas where logging has occurred, fire breaks have been built, road bridges built, or damage has occurred to plants from natural causes such as high winds or storms felling trees onto the forest floor.



A Beech orchid mounted on varnished weathered hardwood

Many of our products have been grown from seed using the “flasking” method.



Our product is easily recognisable by its attractive label as shown below.

The following native orchids are available

<p>Bulbophyllum bracteatum Tiny blotched bulbophyllum</p> <p>Bulbophyllum elisae Pineapple orchid</p> <p>Bulbophyllum exiguum Mat orchid</p> <p>Bulbophyllum shepherdii Wheat-leaf orchid</p> <p>Calanthe triplicata Christmas orchid</p> <p>Cymbidium madidum Banded cymbidium</p> <p>Cymbidium suave Snake orchid</p> <p>Dendrobium aemulum Ironbark orchid</p> <p>Dendrobium aemulum Brush box form</p> <p>Dendrobium falcorostrum Beech orchid</p> <p>Dendrobium gracilicaule Tiger orchid</p> <p>Dendrobium kingianum Pink rock orchid</p>	<p>Dendrobium monophyllum Lily-of-the-valley orchid</p> <p>Dendrobium pedunculatum</p> <p>Dendrobium schneiderae</p> <p>Dendrobium schneiderae var. major</p> <p>Dendrobium speciosum var. hilli Rock orchids</p> <p>Dendrobium tetragonum Tree spider orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia bowmanii Scrub pencil orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia cucumerina Cucumber orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia dolichophylla Yellow pencil orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia fairfaxii White pencil orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia linguiformis Thumb-nail orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia pugioniformis Dagger orchid</p>	<p>Dockrillia striolata Streaked rock orchid</p> <p>Dockrillia teretifolia Bridal veil orchid</p> <p>Liparis reflexa Yellow rock orchid</p> <p>Plectorrhiza brevilabris Northern tangle root orchid</p> <p>Plectorrhiza tridentate Tangle orchid</p> <p>Rhinerrhiza divitiflora Raspy root orchid</p> <p>Sarcochilus australis Butterfly orchid</p> <p>Sarcochilus ceciliae Fairy bells</p> <p>Sarcochilus falcatus Orange blossom orchid</p> <p>Sarcochilus fitzgeraldii Ravine orchid</p> <p>Sarcochilus hillii Tiny tree orchid</p> <p>Sarcochilus olivaceus Lawyer orchid</p>
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