



Orchids in the Home  
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Orchids have a reputation for being difficult to grow, but many species do well in homes and in yards. There are more and more orchids available for purchase at grocery stores and nurseries, and most of these orchids do well under average home conditions, much like African Violets.

Phaelanopsis, or Moth Orchid, is the most commonly sold for growing indoors. The flowers come in many colors -- white, yellow, purple, pink and even multicolor. These plants do well at indoor temperatures and the relatively low humidity found in most homes. Their natural bloom season is late winter to early spring, and the flowers may last one or two months. If you trim the spent flower stalk down to four to eight inches, it may rebloom. The main reasons many Phaelanopsis don't rebloom are:

1. Not enough light. An east or south window or a skylight is good as long as the plant is protected from direct sun.
2. Too much water. The medium around the roots should dry out between watering or they will rot. Many orchids are sold in plastic or ceramic pots with no air circulation, and this promotes rotten roots. It is best to repot them in a plastic pot with slits in the side or into an unglazed ceramic pot.

Most indoor orchids don't grow in soil because in their natural habitat, they grow on trees, and their roots grow in the air. They often do best in a medium such as chunks of fir bark or coconut husk. They can be fertilized with African violet fertilizer or fertilizer made especially for orchids.

There are several lovely species of orchids that grow outside in the soil in our climate. A few are native to California and may be purchased from native plant nurseries. Two non-native orchids that do well outside are the Chinese Ground Orchid, *Bletilla striata*, and *Pleione tongariro*. Both grow best in shade and are much like bulbs, which go dormant in the winter, but come back in the spring.

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Cymbidium is a very large, showy orchid that does well outdoors in the warmer parts of El Dorado County. It blooms in the winter and early spring, and the flowers are frost sensitive, so these plants need the protection of a covered porch or patio in the winter. Or one can use old fashioned incandescent Christmas lights to keep them from freezing. Cymbidiums can take full sun in the winter, but in the spring and summer, they need shade.

Want to learn a lot more about these beautiful plants? Come to UCCE Master Gardener Heidi Napier's free class, Orchids, today August 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, in Cameron Park. Orchids can be grown in your home and yard, and you don't need a greenhouse. Learn about the care and feeding of these enchanting plants, and which varieties are easiest to grow.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions at local Farmers Markets and Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.