



# Woolf Orchid Culture

## Miltoniopsis Culture at Woolf Orchidculture

*By John Woolf*

We find these orchids to be relatively easy to grow they tolerate a much wider temperature variation than first thought and the flowers can last up to 3 months in good condition under the right cultural practices. I have listed the cultural conditions in order of importance to the success of growing and flowering this magnificent genus.

### (1) Humidity – watering

We find these plants need to be surrounded by moist air all year round. Compost must retain some moisture but allow good air movement through. When watering 'flood' plants to remove the stale air and replenishing it with fresh oxygenated air water quality is of utmost importance for these high altitude plants.

### (2) Compost (growing media)

Repotting every two years must be done at the right time when new roots are being produced and before they get too long as you have more chance of damaging them. Plants should be grown in as small a pot as possible with a well grown plant in a 100mm pot producing 50 plus blooms. We use a 5-10 mm composted bark.

### (3) Air Movement

This is a must as if kept moist in a stale air situation you will have fungal/bacterial problems. It is better to prevent problems of this type than to try to control them once they have taken hold.

### (4) Light

#### Temperature

These plants are shade lovers, plants should be grown so the leaves are strongly upright (see fertilizer). We find they will tolerate temperature from a low of 5°C to highs of 35°C with no detrimental effects as long as common sense prevails. In hot weather over 30°C water plants late evening and keep the atmosphere around the plants high. It is normal for the plants to get a greyish look about them in hot weather. If your temperature goes over 35°C for lengthy periods (more than three days at a time) your plants will suffer.

#### Flowers

These are produced from November to February in Toowoomba however plants may flower at any time of the year you will find blooms produced during the cooler periods will have better size colour and substance. So if you are dedicated to winning shows you may have to take a look at an artificially controlled environment. Flower colour can change dramatically depending on the weather and fertilizing regime. If the raceme opens today in 30°C plus the colour etc will not be as good as a raceme that opens 2 - 3 days later in 22°C conditions. Flowers last well on the plants alas not well when cut.



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## Fertilizer

It is important to keep the leaves of the plants firm too much nitrogen in shady conditions make for soft plants easy victims for fungi/bacterial attacks and easy prey for pests. We have found chelated low nitrogen mixtures to be the best. A little extra nitrogen to get the plants away after winter (in late August) is beneficial.

## Pests

Being a softer leaved orchid ( as distinct from a hard leaved Cattleya) most pests will enjoy munching on the leaves and the luscious big soft blooms prevention is better than cure so use low toxic preventative measures to keep plants and growing area free of pests.

## Disease

If your conditions are correct with good bouyant air movement your disease problems should be minimal if you continually suffer problems look at your growing area compost water quality fertilizing program etc.

These are truly a beautiful orchid and as many orchid lovers are finding not that difficult to grow. There are plenty of these 'pansy ' orchids available we currently have some 30 plus mericlones at different stages from flask to flowering.

So go grow a Miltonia (opsis).