

VACATION TIME FOR ORCHIDS: A DRY WINTER REST

COMPILED BY ED LYSEK AND SANDRA SVOBODA

MANY ORCHIDS GROW in areas where the weather turns drier, cooler, and brighter during the autumn and winter months. Frequent morning fogs are common. In most cases, the early days of the dry period are characterized by condensing morning fogs which deliver small amounts of moisture to the plant, progressing to much drier days during the last four to six weeks of winter. For these orchids to bloom and grow properly, a winter rest is necessary. You can achieve this by reducing your usual watering and fertilizing frequency in autumn and winter days. Some orchids that should not have water or fertilizer, and that is what we are describing in this article.

Grouping plants together that need similar care can help you in managing this change in your fall and winter care. When withholding water, if the canes or pseudobulbs of your resting orchids begin to shrivel or wrinkle, an occasional light misting may be necessary.

As with many things with orchids, there are differing opinions amongst growers. Here is our list, based on research of the experts in the field, of those orchids that need a dry winter rest with neither water nor fertilizer that will allow you to get the best out of your orchids.

Calanthes

Deciduous calanthes (the subgenera Preptanthe) bloom in the late autumn, and when the blooms are finished, and the leaves have dropped, restrict all water. When new roots appear, water sparingly until the leaves form.



Calanthe cardioglossa

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<i>Calanthe cardioglossa</i>	<i>Calanthe rubens</i>
<i>Calanthe hirsuta</i>	<i>Calanthe rosea</i>
<i>Calanthe labrosa</i>	<i>Calanthe succedanea</i>
<i>Calanthe papuana</i>	<i>Calanthe vestita</i>
<i>Calanthe punctate</i>	



Calanthe vestita

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Catesetum fimbriatum 'Golden Horizon'



Clowesia warszewiczii 'SVO'



Catamodes Dragons Tail 'Dark Tale'

Catasetinae

The Catasetinae is a group that includes a number of familiar genera, including *Catasetum*, *Clowesia*, *Cycnoches*, and *Mormodes* and the intergeneric hybrids. All these orchids have a distinct winter dormancy and an active summer growth phase. Once you understand their cultural requirements, this distinct growth cycle makes these plants fun to grow and flower.

- November 15 in the Northern Hemisphere (May 15 in the Southern Hemisphere): Reduce Watering! In autumn when leaves yellow, reduce watering to about half the amount and frequency.
- January 15 in the Northern Hemisphere (July 15 in the Southern Hemisphere): Stop Watering! In early winter, stop watering even if the plants are blooming or some green or yellow leaves remain. If they shrivel so much that you are concerned, mist lightly or occasionally, trying not to allow water into the root area.

- May 15-June 15 in the Northern Hemisphere (November 15–December 15 in the Southern Hemisphere): Begin watering when roots are three to five or more inches long. It's OK to slip the plant out of the pot to measure root length. Once watering begins, water like a monsoon!

<i>Catasetum</i> species and hybrids
<i>Clowesia</i> species and hybrids
<i>Cycnoches</i> species and hybrids
<i>Momodes</i> species and hybrids
<i>Catamodes</i> (<i>Catasetum</i> × <i>Mormodes</i>)
<i>Clowestum</i> (<i>Catasetum</i> × <i>Clowesia</i>)
<i>Cycnodes</i> (<i>Cycnoches</i> × <i>Mormodes</i>)
<i>Fredclarkeara</i> (<i>Catasetum</i> × <i>Clowesia</i> × <i>Mormodes</i>)
<i>Monnierara</i> (<i>Catasetum</i> × <i>Cycnoches</i> × <i>Mormodes</i>)
<i>Mormodia</i> (<i>Clowesia</i> × <i>Mormodes</i>)



Mormodes andreettae 'SVO' AM/AOS



Cycnoches lehmannii

Cattleyas, Laelias, Oncidiums

Many cattleyas, laelias, and oncidiums will finish growing by the end of autumn and should be hardened off with reduced water and fertilizer but not the Spartan regime of other genera. Fertilizing with less frequency will make these genera happy and prevent them from breaking into unwanted off-season growth that frequently delays flowering.

Dendrobiums

In some species of dendrobiums, a rest period is as vital as light, air, or water. Fertilizer should always be reduced during the rest period. The continued application only contributes to salt buildup in the potting mix and doesn't help the plant. Himalayan dendrobiums of the nobile type and the section Callista begin their vacation in late fall. They should be put in a bright spot

(especially if you live in an area where the light is decreased during the winter) and given no water or fertilizer until after they have bloomed in the spring. Some growers keep them bone dry, other heavily mist once or twice a month. When flower buds appear, you can increase the misting, but wait for your normal watering and fertilizing until you have flowering and new growths have started.

Some of the dendrobiums should have cooler temperatures during this time. To determine that, you need to do some research to determine the geographical location of the dendrobiums that you grow. Jay's Internet Orchid Species Photo Encyclopedia at www.orchidspecies.com is an excellent resource.

Australian dendrobiums: Most require watering sparingly during the winter. Those below require a much drier winter rest.

<i>Dendrobium kingianum</i>	Just enough water in winter so pseudobulbous stems don't become shriveled.
<i>Dendrobium macrostachyum</i> (syn. <i>stuartii</i>)	Withhold water until new growths are 1.5-2.0 inches (3.7-5.0 cm) long.
<i>Dendrobium tetragonum</i>	Some recommend no water during the winter while others recommend occasional misting.

Sec. Phalaenanthae

<i>Dendrobium affine</i>	Withhold water during winter rest.
<i>Dendrobium bigibbum</i>	Long, dry rest needed in winter. Mist to keep pseudobulbs from shriveling.
<i>Dendrobium williamsianum</i>	Prolonged dry period after flowering.

Sec. Spatulata (Antelope Type), no rest period



Dendrobium kingianum



Dendrobium affine

Sec. Dendrobium: Many with deciduous leaves need a dry winter rest. Others, not listed here, need reduced water, but should not be allowed to dry out for long periods of time, and have an early morning misting, with no fertilizer.

<i>Dendrobium amoenum</i>	Dry period of 3-4 months. Dry out between waterings.
<i>Dendrobium aphyllum</i>	Keep dry through winter and early spring with very occasional light watering.
<i>Dendrobium crepidatum</i>	Water much reduced, remaining dry for several days before light watering.
<i>Dendrobium crystallinum</i>	Withhold water until new growth starts.
<i>Dendrobium devonianum</i>	Dry rest from late autumn to early spring allowing to dry out between waterings.
<i>Dendrobium dixanthum</i>	Keep dry for several days between watering.
<i>Dendrobium falconeri</i>	Dry for extended periods with only occasional light misting.
<i>Dendrobium heterocarpum</i>	For 1-2 months in late winter, only occasional early morning misting.
<i>Dendrobium moschatum</i>	Dry for a few weeks after growths mature in the autumn. Occasional early morning misting.
<i>Dendrobium nobile</i>	Some growers eliminate water during winter, others only for last 1-2 months of winter.
<i>Dendrobium parishii</i>	Late winter for 1-2 months, limit to occasional early morning misting.
<i>Dendrobium signatum</i>	Dry for 1-2 months in early spring, only occasional early morning misting if pseudobulbs begin to shrivel.
<i>Dendrobium macrostachyum</i> (syn. <i>stuartii</i>)	Start dry rest when buds appear and withhold water until new growths are 1.5-2.0 inches (3.7-5.0 cm) long.
<i>Dendrobium tortile</i>	Dry in the late winter for 1-2 months, limit to occasional early morning misting.

Sec. Callista: Use just enough water to keep pseudobulbs from shriveling, no fertilizer.

<i>Dendrobium chrysotoxum</i>	<i>Dendrobium jenkinsii</i>
<i>Dendrobium densiflorum</i>	<i>Dendrobium sulcatum</i>
<i>Dendrobium farmeri</i>	<i>Dendrobium thysiflorum</i>
<i>Dendrobium lindleyi</i> (syn. <i>aggregatum</i>)	



Dendrobium parishii



Dendrobium thysiflorum

Sec. Latouria: No winter rest. Water throughout year.

Sec. Formosae (Nigrohirsutae Type) Many require a slight, short rest when growth is completed but they should not be allowed to dry out completely for extended periods of time. The following require a dry rest period in winter.

<i>Dendrobium christyanum</i>	For 1-2 months in late winter, allow plants to dry out completely. Mist occasionally.
<i>Dendrobium trigonopus</i>	For 1-2 months in late winter, allow plants to dry out completely. Mist occasionally.

Other Species

<i>Dendrobium tetragonum</i>	Some growers recommend no water during the winter, others recommend reducing water and allowing them to dry out between misting.
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Galeandra

Withhold water to the species after the growths have matured and the deciduous leaves have fallen. Mist in the early morning if the pseudobulbs begin to shrivel. Higher light is also recommended.

Habenaria

There are approximately 880 species of *Habenaria* that have been formally described. Once the aerial part of the plant dies, stop watering and keep the plant dry. In late winter, early spring, check weekly for vegetation and start watering lightly. If no vegetation has emerged by mid-spring, heavily mist the plants to encourage growth.



Dendrobium tetragonum subsp. *giganteum*



Dendrobium trigonopus



Galeandra batemanii



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Habenaria rhodocheila



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Anguloa virginalis

Lycastes, and Anguloas

The deciduous species should not be watered when the leaves have fallen. Those that are not deciduous should be watered less than usual. Return to regular watering when the flower stems are seen in mid- to late spring.

All <i>Anguloa</i> species	<i>Lycaste consobrina</i>
<i>Lycaste aromatica</i>	<i>Lycaste cruenta</i>
<i>Lycaste angelae</i>	<i>Lycaste luminosa</i>
<i>Lycaste bradeorum</i>	<i>Lycaste macrobulbon</i>
<i>Lycaste brevispatha</i> (syn. <i>candida</i>)	<i>Lycaste suaveolens</i>
<i>Lycaste campbellii</i>	<i>Lycaste xytriophora</i>
<i>Lycaste cochleata</i>	



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Lycaste cruenta

Pleione

As days shorten in the autumn and growth slows, reduce watering. The leaves will start to yellow in late September, with *Pleione pleionoides* and *Pleione limprichtii* first. About three weeks after the leaves fall, the roots die off, so it is best to stop watering when the leaves fall. Even the autumn-flowering species begin their dormant period during the autumn. (Cumleton) (Cribb & Butterfield).

A word: you do your best to mimic the areas in which the orchids of the different genera we have discussed grow in situ, but often it is not possible to meet all the requirements. You can withhold water and fertilizer, with a bit of self-control. Then you can move your plants to different areas of your growing area to find a



Pleione maculata 'Snow White'

brighter, cooler spot if indicated; this may take a couple of years of trying to identify the proper place. However, finally, realize that you may not be able to provide all that the references say the plant needs. Try your best, and then, relax and enjoy your orchids.*

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About the Author



Ed started growing cymbidiums in his backyard in Claremont, CA over 30 years ago. He now grows a wide range of temperature-tolerant orchids in his greenhouse and in sheltered locations outdoors in Templeton, CA on the California Central Coast. Ed serves as the Vice President of the Five Cities Orchid Society.