

Zygopetalum Orchids

History: Sir William Hooker first described this genus from a plant given to him from Brazil in 1827. There are 18 species of Zygopetalum, most of them being terrestrial and few epiphytic. The area of distribution is the entire northern part of South and Central America and some parts of Mexico. The majority of species occur in Brazil at higher elevations.

Light: Zygopetalums need bright filtered light or moderate shading or morning sun. Full sun in the afternoon can be harmful and will burn the foliage.

Temperature: They prefer temperature range of the following: Day temperatures between 60 to 85 F, Night temperatures between 40 to 60 F.

Humidity and Watering: Zygopetalums thrive on abundant and regular watering. Good watering once a week should be sufficient. When plants have finished growing in August you can give them a 2-3 week rest, and at that time it is only necessary to spray the compost so that it does not dry out. In the plants native habitat, this is the season of drought, a condition essential for inducing the inflorescence.

Repotting and Compost: Zygopetalums do best in a light compost which holds moisture and has good drainage. This might be a mixture of fine and coarse Douglas Fir Bark with a small amount of coarse perlite (10-15%). Containers should preferably be plastic and large enough to allow root to spread out freely. The roots, in fact, grow rapidly but are quite delicate and do not lend themselves readily to repotting. This should be done every other year in the summer months or during the rest period.

Propagation: The simplest way is by division at the time of repotting. Repotting methods are the same way as cymbidiums. Other methods are seed production or mericloneing

Disease and Pests: If it is too hot and dry there can be problems with spider mites which should not happen along coastal regions. A common trait is a Bacterial leaf spot which primarily affects the older foliage which is deciduous on many plants. Good air circulation and cooler temperatures are important to help reduce and eliminate the spots. If the condition persists or gets worse Antibacterial and fungal sprays are beneficial.

This cultural information provided courtesy of Orchids of Los Osos.

Five Cities Orchid Society PO Box 1066 Grover Beach, CA 93483-1066 Internet: www.fcoss.org	Orchids of Los Osos 1614 Sage Avenue Los Osos, CA 93402 Tel: 805-528-0181
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