

# Australian Tropicools™

Dendrobium Hybrids and Sarcochilus

**Tropicool™ Hybrids** These plants have a tropical species in their background, in most cases Dendrobium bigibbum, a plant which is used in many of the world's cut flower orchids. It lasts longer than most Dendrobium species and produces flamboyant flowers. Tropicools™ will flower off an immature growth, whilst the 'colds' need a mature growth to show its wares.

As bigibbum flowers in autumn, and most other commonly used species in our hybrids flower in spring, Tropicools™ should flower any time between November and March, with the peak at the end of January, early February, once they are acclimatized to the Northern Hemisphere. As a result, this type of hybrid has filled in the off season with wonderful flowers, and will tolerate as much cold as most other native Australian Dendrobiums.

**Watering** The trick with Tropicools™ is to keep them **DRY** in cold weather. The colder the **DRIER!** In cold weather, when the bulbs start to wrinkle, give them a good drink in the morning, avoiding the coldest days. If the bulbs are not wrinkling, they are not thirsty! Summer, water every 2 - 3 days, **WHEN** they need it. In winter every 7 - 10 days, **IF** they need it. If in doubt, don't water.

**Dendrobiums Species** As with the Tropicools™ above, these should not be over watered. If you watch the bulbs you will see they generally wrinkle before the Tropicools™ so they can tolerate more water, but don't over due it. Be guided by the plant bulbs!

**Sarcochilus** on the other hand don't have pseudobulbs, so they have to be treated a little differently, in that in summer you can't let them dry out as they don't have any water reserves, other than in their leaves. Water when they need it. Feed and treat them the same as ordinary Dendrobiums, except for the watering. In winter, cut back as you do with the Tropicools™ for watering.

**Fertilizer** Avoid high Nitrogen(N) fertilizer like the plague, it leads to soft, fungal prone growth and few flowers. We use a high Potassium(K) food such as 8-5-25, at a rate of one gram per liter of water, every two weeks, all year around. We compliment that by using Amino K, as a foliar or drench application. This helps in the uptake of the Potassium(K) maintaining higher levels of sugar and carbohydrates.

To get optimum results when using Pine bark mixes, it is a good idea to give your plants a drink of lime-water in early autumn and again in early spring. We use micro-fine lime (F70 Superfine Limestone) at a rate of one gram per liter.

**Light** Morning sun is a vital ingredient, to allow the bulbs/leaves to warm gently, the plants will appreciate it. Light doesn't have to be as bright for Sarcochilus as for Dendrobiums to grow them successfully.

**Potting** Do Not over pot! Air movement is important, we hang our best large plants, not seedlings. If you follow these guidelines you should grow them as well as your other natives. We use treated Pine bark. Before potting using the dry mix, sieve the mix to remove all fine particles.

**For Seedlings** - 6 parts fine, two parts medium, and 1 part 10mm river pebbles.

**Dendrobiums & Sarcochilus** - up to 140mm pots, 6 parts medium, two parts fine, and one part 10mm river pebbles.

**Dendrobium speciosum** - 6 parts medium, 2 parts coarse and one part 20mm river pebbles.

*This information is paraphrased from a handout provided by our friends Brian & Phena Gerhard at Down Under Native Orchids.*

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