

It's Ryan "The Orchid Guy" here, and today we're going to continue covering MORE important orchid care basics, with a few additional tips from our book:

<http://www.OrchidsMadeEasy.com/TheBook.html>

Today's topic is FERTILIZER. And I'm going to help you answer another question you might be asking, and that is:

"What Should You Be FEEDING Your Orchid?"

I've got some important tips for you on this...

But first, to make sure you and I are on the same page, let's go over a few fertilizer basics when it comes to orchids.

FERTILIZER 101

All fertilizers contain Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium as their principle ingredients.

These are commonly referred to as N-P-K, and are expressed in numbers - in terms of their % content in a given fertilizer.

So for example, when you look on bag of fertilizer and see "30-10-10", that fertilizer contains 30% Nitrogen, 10% Phosphorus, and 10% Potassium.

Make sense?

Good :-)

Now, let's talk about the specific role each of these ingredients plays in the healthy growth of your orchid.

THE ROLE OF NITROGEN IN ORCHIDS

Nitrogen is necessary for your orchid to grow. However, if you go OVERBOARD on the nitrogen, your plant will often grow into a towering GIANT!

Now, your giant "freak" orchid might make for good dinner conversation... but the problem is

that this excessive growth comes at a steep cost:

And that cost is DELAYED - or in many cases - a COMPLETE ABSENCE of flowers!

(My recommendation? Go easy on the Nitrogen...)

THE ROLE OF PHOSPHORUS IN ORCHIDS

It's now understood today that phosphorus regulates MANY critical activities in orchids - including root growth and probably the most important: STIMULATING flowering.

But like Nitrogen, too much Phosphorus can cause some unwanted side effects:

Too much Phosphorus can lead to stunted growth, and will often cause your plants to have excessively dark leaves.

THE ROLE OF POTASSIUM IN ORCHIDS

Like Nitrogen, and Phosphorus, Potassium is also necessary for the healthy growth in your orchids.

Too much Potassium can "burn" your plant, but a deficiency in Potassium is often going to result in orchids that have a "dwarf-like" appearance.

Okay, so those are a few basics.

Now, the question is:

"What kind of fertilizer should you use?"

There are many fertilizers on the market made specifically for orchids, and sometimes these can be a bit tough to find unless you go through a specialty retailer.

But you don't necessarily have to stick to orchid fertilizers to be successful with your plants - some "generic" plant fertilizers are also perfectly acceptable.

(The KEY is that your fertilizer MUST contain a

few CRITICAL ingredients, and contain an acceptable ratio of N-P-K.)

So let's put it all together...

To help you choose the right fertilizer for your orchid, here's a simple "Orchid Fertilizer Checklist" that I like to use.

MY ORCHID FERTILIZER CHECKLIST:

1. Nitrogen - Total amount is 20% or less.
2. The source of nitrogen must be "Nitrate Nitrogen" or "Ammoniacal Nitrogen"

(NOT Urea - because orchids cannot access the Nitrogen locked up in Urea)
3. Phosphorus - Any amount > 0%
4. Contains Supplementary Calcium (up to 15%)
5. Contains Magnesium (up to 8%)
6. Should also contain trace elements like Sodium, Iron, Copper, etc.

Feel free to print up this list and take it with you to your garden store next time you pick up a container of fertilizer for your orchids :-)

In the meantime, if you'd like a comprehensive orchid reference guide with EVERYTHING you need to know about orchid care, please feel free to take a look at our book:

<http://www.OrchidsMadeEasy.com/TheBook.html>

Thanks for reading!

- Ryan "The Orchid Guy" :-)

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