

Bulbophyllum

Pronunciation: bulb-oh-FILL-um

Tribe: Dendrobieae

Subtribe: Bulbophyllinae

The genus *Bulbophyllum* was described by Louis-Marie Aubert Du Petit-Thouars in 1822, with the name coming from the Greek *bulbos* (bulb) and *phyllon* (leaf). *Bulbophyllum* and closely allied genera (especially *Cirrhopetalum*) are considered to be the largest group of orchids. Taxonomists have described at least two dozen allied genera, which have been combined with, and separated from, *Bulbophyllum*, over the years. Some of the most commonly encountered allied genera are; *Cirrhopetalum*, *lone*, *Mastigion*, *Megaclinium*, *Rhytionanthos* and *Trias*. The plants are typically small to medium (although some have leaves up to a meter long) creeping epiphytes, having a sympodial growth habit with prominent pseudobulbs, with one or two fleshy leaves. There is a wide range of fantastic flower shapes and sizes (2 mm to 400 mm). All have a hinged lip that aids in pollination. The pollinator (most often a small fly) lands on the lip, which tilts and causes the pollinator to fall back in to the sticky pollina. The flowers are usually short lived (5-7 days) and are occasionally fragrant (while the fragrance can be pleasant it is often quite foul). Some commonly encountered species are: *Bulbophyllum dearei*, *echinolabium*, *falcatum*, *fasinator*, *flabellum-veneris* (*syn. lepidum*), *guttalatum*, *lasiochilum*, *lobbii*, *longissimum*, *makoyanum*, *medusae*, and *putidum*. Until recently little hybridizing has been done in the genus however, two particularly attractive hybrids are *Bulbophyllum* Daisy Chain; an example of the smaller umbellate-flowered group, and *Bulbophyllum* Elizabeth Ann; an wonderful example of the large-flowered group.

Number of species: This is an enormous genus rife with synonymy. The actual number of species varies depending on whether or not the proposed, closely allied genera are included. Currently, the World Checklist of Monocotyledons recognizes only *Trias* as a separate genus and includes more than 2000 species in *Bulbophyllum*.

Distribution: Predominately tropical or subtropical, although the range can extend into temperate regions. A few dozen species are found in the New World (South and Central American and the Caribbean). Several hundred species are found in equatorial Africa and the island of Madagascar. Most species are found in Asia; ranging from the foothills of the Himalayas (2500 m) in Indochina, down through Southeast Asia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia (especially Java, Borneo, Sumatra, Sulawesi), New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand. The island of New Guinea, which has at least 600 species, is believed to be the dissemination point for the genus.

Since *Bulbophyllum* species are a very diverse and wide ranging group of orchids, only general culture can be given. The grower should try and obtain habitat information for his/her species of interest.

CULTURE:

Temperature: Most *Bulbophyllum* species are warm growing and should see a winter temperature of no less than 65 F at night. Species from more temperate regions can be grown 5-10 degrees cooler. Maintain a gentle air movement.

Light: Moderate to bright (2000 to 3500 foot-candles). Higher light, that does not damage the leaves, seems to result in better and more frequent blooming.

Water-Humidity: Most species come from humid rain forests. Humidity should be kept at 60% , which can be difficult to do

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outside of the greenhouse. Water frequently, as both mounted (at least daily) and potted plants (several times a week) will thrive under wetter conditions than most orchids. ***Bulbophyllum*** may be the exception to the rule "when in doubt, don't water". Species from more temperate regions often have a dry period, and watering should be adjusted accordingly.

Fertilizer: Use a balanced fertilizer at quarter strength once a week during the summer. This can be reduced to once a month in the winter.

Potting: ***Bulbophyllum*** species tend to prefer a minimum of repotting. Mounting (tree fern or cork slabs), well draining baskets, and pots can all be used successfully. The recommended potting media are sphagnum moss, coir (coconut chips or fibers) and tree fern. The choice of potting will often be dictated by the very long rhizomes of some species. Due to their rambling growth habit, some species