

Paphiopedilum (The Lady Slipper Orchid)

Pronunciation: paff-ee-oh-PED-ih-lum

Tribe: Cyripedieae
Subtribe: none

The generic name *Paphiopedilum* was derived from the Greek *Paphos* (a city with a temple dedicated to Venus) and *pedilon* (sandal). As cypripediums, phragmipediums and selenipediums are popularly known as 'lady's slippers', so too are paphs since they are all characterized by a slipper-shaped lip. Rather than growing from a pseudobulb, these mostly terrestrial, sympodial plants instead form fans of six or more leaves. The flowers of some species present warts and hairs, fascinating traits for lovers of this genus. Depending on the species, the flowers are borne either singularly or in multiples. Ernst Pfitzer separated the 60-65 known species from *Cypripedium* in 1886. The genus has been further divided into subgenera which form more or less natural groupings. These subgenera include: **Parvisepalum, Brachypetalum, Polyantha, Sigmatopetalum** and **Cochlopetalum**.

Due to their ease in adapting to cultivation, paphs are common in hobbyist collections, far more so than cyps or phrags. Many artificial hybrids have been made with paphiopedilums and the number of awards is history. Unlike other popular orchid genera, ways to meristem *Paphiopedilum* have yet to be found and all plants are either collected or grown from seed. Artificially created species are always better in shape and ease of cultivation due to line breeding. Buying collected plants is not recommended – and could land you in jail! Species popular in collections include: *P. armeniacum*, *P. barbatum*, *P. callosum*, *P. charlesworthii*, *P. concolor*, *P. delenatii*, *P. farrieanum*, *P. lowii*, *P. malipoensis*, *P. micranthum*, *P. rothschildianum*, *P. sanderianum* *P. sukhakulii* and a long etc.

Number of species: The World Monocot Checklist currently recognizes over 100 species, including numerous varietal forms and 23 natural hybrids.

Distribution: Tropical Asia

Temperature: Requirements vary. 55F – 100F, depending on species.

Light: 1000 footcandles in the hot Summer months, 1,400 footcandles in the cooler months.

Water-Humidity: Wait until potting medium is starting to dry out but not completely dry before watering. Water thoroughly until water runs freely through the drain holes in the pot.

Fertilizer: Fertilize with a balanced, water-soluble formula at 150-200ppm (parts per million). Fertilizer is applied from October through May on the day after every other watering. Ensure two waterings between every fertilizer application to remove any residual salts from previous applications. Discontinue fertilizer during hot Summer months to prevent salt burns as a result of plant taking up too much fertilizer.

Potting: A fairly porous mix is recommended, consisting of five parts medium fir bark, two parts Canadian peat and one part each charcoal, extra coarse Sponge Rok #4 and ½-inch (1.25-cm) Stalite. Combine components in these proportions to produce a mix that provides support for the roots while allowing them to breath and resist becoming water-logged.

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