

Osmoglossum pulchellum orchid culture- in the Riverina region of NSW

-Lilly-of-the-Valley orchid

The genus *Osmoglossum* comprises about 7 species of epiphytic and sometimes lithophytic orchids (1, 3) that are native to the dry forests of Mexico and central America.

The genus was previously part of the *Odontoglossum* group before renaming (1). *Osmoglossum pulchellum* is also known by its synonyms *Odontoglossum pulchellum* (1, 2) and *Cuitlauzina pulchella* (6, 7).



Osmoglossum pulchellum, pronounced *pull-kell-um* (4), comes from high altitude dry forests at elevations of 1200 to 2500m (2,3). Flowers are white with a yellow labellum. Flower spikes are produced from the base of the pseudobulb in winter (2,3) and the plants flower in late winter to early spring (5). Racemes grow to about 50cm long and tend to droop so are best staked to better display the flowers. Flowers have a beautiful fragrance which has given the plant its common name of Lilly-of-the-Valley (3) and flowers are very long lasting (5). Pseudobulbs grow up to 10 cm long with leaves up to 30cm long (2).

Temperature requirements

Osmoglossum pulchellum prefers cooler temperatures and tolerates temperatures down to 1°C although prefers a higher minimum temperature around 6-8°C (1). In its native environment temperatures range from 9 to 18°C in winter and 12 to 25°C in summer. They have been successfully grown in a shadehouse in Wagga, Melbourne and Adelaide without additional heat. Although not preferred, plants will tolerate the typical temperatures experienced in the Riverina (-2 to 44°C) but must be kept cool in summer and protected from frosts in winter.

Light

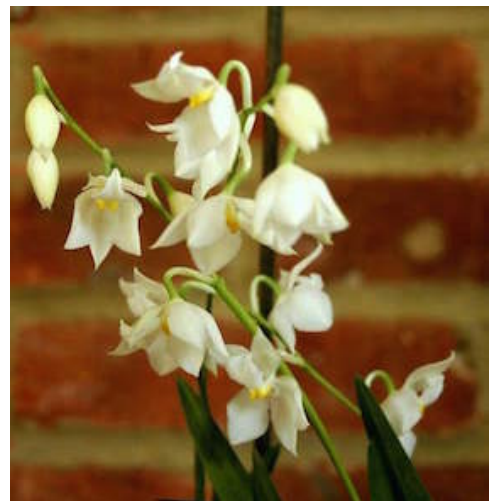
They do best in semi shade avoiding the hot afternoon sun and should be grown in a shady spot low down in the greenhouse (5). Growing under a 40-60% shade cloth in the Riverina over summer is considered optimum but they can receive more sun in winter. About 1500fc is the recommended light intensity which is relatively low.

Humidity and air movement

Misting sprays are generally not required except on extremely hot days with temperatures greater than 35°C.

Although they experience a dry winter period of about 8 weeks in their native environment humidity remains high which prevents the pseudobulbs shrivelling which is essential for good flowering. Generally they prefer humidity levels of 50 to 80% (1) although will tolerate lower humidity.

Water



The plants require regular watering during the growing period, up to 3 times a week in summer, twice a week in spring and autumn but require a dry rest in winter with just occasional watering to prevent the pseudobulbs shrivelling (7). Growing them under a polycarbonate roof is recommended to keep them drier in winter and protect them from frost. Flowers are subject to fungal attack if wet so avoid wetting the flowers.

Potting medium

The plants prefer a finer grade potting medium of small bark combined with perlite or charcoal (2) or some growers use a mix of bark and sphagnum moss (5). The moss is to keep them consistently moist which all plants related to *Odontoglossums* prefer (5). They are said to resent repotting and so should only be repotted when plants are stressed (5).

They can also be grown well on bark slabs but must have high humidity (about 70%) during the winter dry period to prevent the pseudobulbs shriveling to achieve good flowering (7).



Osmoglossum pulchellum
'Keryn' CC/OSCOV

Fertilizers

Feed regularly during the growing season with half strength liquid fertilizer but stop fertilizing during winter.

Further reading and acknowledgments

This guide is based on information provided by local growers and the references listed below.

1. Gardening Australia Flora's Orchids. ABC Books (2005).
2. Growing orchids for beginners. <http://growing-orchids-for-beginners.blogspot.com.au/2010/11/osmoglossum-pulchellum.html>
3. *Osmoglossum pulchellum*. <http://www.pollinia.org/april2013/articles/18.pdf>
4. *Rhynchosteles, Osmoglossums and Rossioglossums* by Brian Milligan. <http://www.oscov.asn.au/articles2/rhyncost.htm>
5. *Species for July and August* by Brian Milligan. <http://www.oscov.asn.au/articles4/speciesjulyaug.html>
6. *Cuitlauzina pulchella*. http://orchids.wikia.com/wiki/Cuitlauzina_pulchella
7. *Cuitlauzina pendula*. http://www.aos.org/am/images/pdf/cuitlauzina_pendula.pdf

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These notes are intended as a guide only and are composed from available information and local experience. The Wagga Wagga Orchid Society and its members are not responsible for any loss or damage to plants that may occur.