

Stanhopea Orchid Growing in the Riverina region of NSW

Stanhopea are mainly epiphytes that originate in the damp forests from Mexico to NW Argentina in Central and South America (1, 3). There are at least 70 species of Stanhopea (1, 6, 8). They can be found from sea level to 5000m and although many are tropical others are cool growers and suited to similar temperatures to Cymbidiums (6).

Their pseudobulbs have a single long elliptical leaf. They have highly fragrant short-lived flowers that last about 3-4 days and usually emerge through the bottom of the hanging basket in which they are growing. Many flower in summer and some in autumn.



Poor flowering can be due to insufficient watering in summer, the lack of a sufficient day-night temperature fluctuation in spring, too much shade or low humidity (4). They are regarded as robust and readily cultivated.

Temperature

Some tropical species such as *Stanhopea annulata*, *S. avicula*, *S. candida*, *S. cirrhata*, *S. ecornuta* and *S. grandiflora* require higher night temperatures above 18°C to flower well (4). Most tropical species need a minimum of 12°C (7). Plants are best grown outdoors or shadehouse in spring and summer in the Riverina climate as they need a good night day temperature drop of 10-15°C to flower well (4). They will need protection from frost in winter preferably in greenhouse with a solid roof. Melbourne experience suggests that *S. nigroviolacea*, *S. tigrina*, *S. wardii* and the hybrid *Stanhopea Spindleriana* (*S. oculata* x *S. tigrina*) can be grown in a shadehouse over winter but others may need a heated glasshouse or well-protected shadehouse (5). *Stanhopea graveolens*, *S. hernandezii*, *S. inodora*, *S. pozoi*, *S. oculata* have all been successful in a bush house environment in Melbourne (7) so should be suitable for the Riverina.

Humidity

All Stanhopea require high humidity year round (7) so frequent misting in summer is recommended.

Light

They prefer bright diffused light about 3000 fc similar to Cattleyas (2) with no direct sunlight (2). Extra shade may be required in summer when temperatures are above 34°C (4). Leaves will burn in strong sun and low humidity (8). They should be grown under 60-70% shade cloth in the Riverina.



Water

They should be watered 3-4 times a week in hot weather and may require daily misting in very hot weather (3) as they like high humidity (8). Avoid wetting the leaves in cool weather in winter as this can cause bacterial spotting on the leaves (3).

Those from Central America experience wet conditions year round and need regular watering and should not be allowed to dry out even in winter as they are sensitive to salt accumulation (2). Regular flushing to remove salts is advisable.

However some species such as *S. hernandezii*, *S. insignis*, *S. jenischiana*, *S. leitzei*, *S. maculosa* and *S. martiana* come from areas with dry winters and these should receive little water and more sunlight in winter (4). These plants should only receive regular watering in mid spring when growth restarts (4).



Potting Medium

Repotting is best done in summer right after flowering is finished (2). Otherwise repot in early spring. They are best grown in a wire basket with a loose weave that allows the pendent flower to penetrate through. Slatted wooden baskets can prevent the flowers from finding their way out. Paperbark tree bark or coconut fibre can be used but must not be too thick. Large mesh gutterguard can be used on the base. Plastic pots with large mesh or slots are also suitable (7).

Medium grade bark and perlite mix permitting very good drainage should be used possibly with some sphagnum moss mixed through to retain moisture (2, 8). Larger plants flower best so try to keep plants in larger baskets. Repotting about every 3 years is usually adequate. Repotting can delay flowering for 12 months.

Fertilizers

Fertilise regularly with dilute high N fertilizer except prior to flowering in early summer when a high phosphorus potassium fertilizer should be used (2).

Natural and intergeneric hybrids

There are at least 5 natural hybrids and 5 intergeneric hybrids, namely *Aciopea*, *Corrhopea*, *Coryhopea*, *Stangora* and *Stanhocynis* (1).



Stanhopea nigroviolacea, *S. martiana*, *S. wardii*, and *S. tigrina* are all currently readily available.

*Your comments and suggestions on this cultural guide are welcome.
Email your comments to dearconsultingservices@gmail.com*

Further reading and acknowledgements

The information in this guide has been gained from local growers and the publications below.

1. Stanhopea. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanhopea>
2. Stanhopea. American Orchid Society. <http://www.aos.org/Default.aspx?id=205>
3. Stanhopea, Gongora and similar culture. Carter and Holmes Orchids. <http://www.carterandholmes.com/stanhopecare.html>
4. Stanhopea culture. <http://stanhopeaculture.blogspot.com.au/2013/01/why-wont-my-stanhopea-bloom.html>
5. Dividing Stanhopeas by Brian Milligan. <http://www.oscov.asn.au/articles5/stanhopea.html>
6. Stanhopeas by bill Mather. <http://www.oscov.asn.au/articles/stanhopea.htm>
7. The Genus Stanhopea by Paul Carver. <http://www.oscov.asn.au/articles6/stanhopea.html>
8. ABC Gardening Australia Flora's Orchids (2005). pp303-304. ABC Books, Sydney.

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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.