

Vanda Orchid Growing in the Riverina region of NSW

There are about 80 species of Vanda (4) native to India, Philippines, Indonesia, Southern China, Sri Lanka, India, New Guinea and north-eastern Australia (1, 4). Most are epiphytes but some are terrestrial (4).

They are erect growing with strap like leaves. Plants can be very short but others grow to a considerable height (3 metres) and need plenty of space and to be supported. Smaller forms grow to about 0.9 metre. In nature they hang from trees in soilless media (2).

Flowers emerge from the stem at the base of the leaf. Flowers are long lasting and range in colour from deep purple to mauve, pink, orange, yellow, green and white. They flower throughout the year in warm climates (1) but mainly in summer and spring in the Riverina. Flowers can last for several weeks (4).

Vanda have been crossed with many other genera to form hybrids (4) but the most common crosses are between *V. coerulea* and *V. sanderiana*. The former species contributes the bright blue colour and the latter species the large round flowers (1).

Vanda are readily grown in open wooden baskets or mounts and they do best in bright, humid warm conditions.

Temperature

Vandas are warm growers and have no cold tolerance and do best in a glasshouse like conditions in the Riverina region (1, 2). Several growers successfully grow them in plastic sided greenhouses with some additional warmth in winter and cooling in summer. The species tolerate a minimum temperature no lower than 13°C and a maximum of 35°C (2).

If night temperatures decline too low, bud drop can occur (3). They are tolerant of higher temperatures, but not for an extended period of time (5) and humidity must be kept high during these periods (5).

Vanda coerulea and its hybrids are said to be more cold tolerant than other Vanda and reputed to grow in Melbourne with some protection.

Light

They prefer medium to bright light but this varies with the type of Vanda. Those with round pencil shaped leaves (terete) need bright light and high sun (35% shade). Intermediate types with semi-terete leaves need slightly less light (3). Those with flat strap-like leaves need partial shade (70% shade) and protection from the midday sun (2, 3).



Watering

They will not tolerate dry conditions and should be kept moist but not soggy (2). Roots must be able to dry out slightly between watering (1).

Water in the morning so leaves can be dry by midday (5).

They prefer high humidity near 75-80% (2,3) and may need a humidifier in the Riverina over summer. They require daily watering in very hot weather over summer (3) in the Riverina.



Potting medium

They are best grown in a coarse bark medium that allows good drainage and aeration (6). Roots will readily grow outside the container (1) which should be encouraged as the roots need good access to air (1). Aerial roots also support the plant and assist it to climb (2). Repot every 3 to 5 years in spring (2). Remove damaged roots when repotting (3). The Bribie Island Orchid Growing Society recommends 60% bark, 30% coarse charcoal and 10% larger chunks of polystyrene (5) as a growing medium.

Because of the monopodial growth habit they can become very tall and difficult to handle. The upper section can be removed and remounted providing there are roots on the upper section, a process called 'topping' (6). The bottom section may also regrow.

Hybrids and related species

A detailed description of the Vanda species and their culture is given in the book "Growing Orchids in Cool Climate Australia. The Japanese orchid or Samurai orchid is a member of the Vanda group and has been renamed *Vanda falcata* (see *Neofinetia falcata* fact sheet on this web site).

Fertilizers

Dilute fertilizers are suggested every week (2) in warmer weather but every 2 months in winter (3).

Further reading and acknowledgements

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

1. ABC Gardening: Flora's Orchids: the orchid bible. ABC Books.
2. Vanda orchid info. <http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/orchids/vanda-orchid-care.htm>
3. Vanda orchid Care. <http://www.orchidsmadeeasy.com/vanda/>
4. Vanda. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanda>
5. Vandaceous orchids. https://www.google.com.au/?gfe_rd=cr&ei=9ecuV-WrEabM8geiuZjYDg&gws_rd=ssl#q=vandaceous+orchids
6. Growing orchids in cool climate Australia. Second edition. (2013) Eds MJ Fraser, J Wright and W Ferris. Orchid Society of Canberra.

Your comments and suggestions on cultural guide are welcome.

Email your comments to dearconsultingservices@gmail.com

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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.