

## **Encyclia cordigera orchid culture in the Riverina region of NSW**

There are over 150 species of *Encyclia* with their natural habitat ranging from southern Mexico through Central America down to Venezuela (1, 6).

*Encyclia cordigera* grows from sea level to 900m. The environment experiences heavy rain in warmer months and a very dry winter period (1) although heavy dew provides moisture during this period.

The species is also known as *Epidendrum atropurpureum* (2) and *Encyclias* were once classified as *Epidendrums* (6).

Plants grow to 60cm tall with two leaves per pseudobulb. Flowers arise from the top of the pseudobulb (1) and can last for over a month (2).

It is regarded as easy to grow under a wide range of conditions (2) although does best in intermediate conditions rather than cool conditions. There are very few published reports of its culture in Australia on which to base growing requirements.



The species has been crossed with *Cattleyas* to produce the intergeneric hybrid *Epicattleya*.

### **Temperature requirements**

In its natural environment *E. cordigera* experiences daytime temperatures of 33°C in spring- summer and nights average 19°C. Winter day temperatures average 32°C and nights 16°C. Temperatures need to drop at night by 10-15°C for them to flower (3). Based on its origin it would appear to be best grown in a protected greenhouse or heated glasshouse in the Riverina as it seems to require warmer nights than typically experienced in this region in winter. It would certainly not tolerate frosts.

The previously related species *E. cochleata*, which has been renamed *Prosthechea cochleata* (6), is reported to tolerate temperatures from 1°C to 40°C in Sydney (5), although this species comes from a higher altitude of 2000m and is therefore more cold tolerant. This species has been successfully grown in the Riverina although under warm growing conditions in a glasshouse.

### **Light**

It likes moderate levels of light equivalent to 2500-3500 fc (1, 2) with light levels increased over winter. They flower best when grown in bright light (2). Avoid hot afternoon sun (4).

### **Humidity and air movement**

They typically experience 80% humidity during the growing season and 60% in winter-spring (1).

### **Water**

Rainfall is moderately heavy during the warm growing season but much less in the winter with a distinct dry season. They like abundant water when actively growing (4) and water at least 3 times a week during hot weather (4). Plants should be allowed to dry slightly

between watering (1) and kept drier over the winter rest period but still receive some water every few weeks.

Watering in the morning during hotter months and misting in the morning during winter allows plant leaves to dry before evening and reduces the risk of mildew (3).

Given its need for a dry rest over winter it should be grown under a polycarbonate roof or glasshouse to protect against winter rain in the Riverina.

### Potting medium

Plants can be grown on mounts if water is applied daily in summer otherwise grown in baskets or pots. They grow well in clay pots or wooden baskets (3). If grown in pots, an open fast draining coarse mix is required. Roots must dry quickly after watering (4). Repotting is best done straight after flowering or as soon as new root growth commences (1).

If subdividing always have at least 4 pseudobulbs per division (4). Newly divided plants should be placed in lower light for several weeks (4).



### Fertilizers

Soluble fertilizer should be applied weekly at quarter to half strength from spring to mid summer (4) and phosphorus fertilizer applied from mid summer to autumn to promote flowering. No fertilizers should be applied during winter (1).

### Acknowledgements and further reading:

This fact sheet has drawn on information by local growers and the references listed below.

1. Charles and Margaret Baker culture sheet. *Encyclia cordigera*.  
<http://www.orchidculture.com/COD/FREE/FS238.html>
2. American Orchid Society. *Encyclia cordigera*.  
<http://www.aos.org/Default.aspx?id=170>
3. How to care for an Encyclia orchid.  
<http://www.gardenguides.com/80706-care-encyclia-orchid.html>
4. Epidendrum and Encyclia culture page.  
<http://www.clanorchids.com/culture/epicult.html>
5. Elanbee Orchids. *Encyclia cochleata* L.  
<http://members.optusnet.com.au/bdobson/Encyclia%20Cochleata.html>
6. Gardening Australia Flora's Orchids. ABC Books (2005).



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