

Culture of Nobile Type Dendrobiums

From Yamamoto Dendrobium book

General Conditions:

- Native to the Far East in Countries such as Burma, India, Thailand and Indo China.
- Grow in their natural habitat on branches of trees in the forest from lowlands to quite cool highlands to 4000 ft elevation in the Himalaya Mountains.
- Extremely hardy. Surviving warm, hot and down to freezing temperatures. IF kept dry, they survive winter temperature of 37-39F and flower around April. If temperatures are maintained about 62-64F as soon as the buds appear, they will flower in January of February.

Watering:

- Direct relationship between temperature, light, and watering.
- When temperatures begin to rise in the spring, gradually start watering.
- In summer when temperatures is high and sunlight is strong, water almost every day to keep the plant from drying.
- When the temperatures start to drop, about Oct-Nov here in Florida, gradually reduce water.
- When night temperatures fall below 50F, water only enough to keep the canes from shriveling – which is about 2 or 3 times per month.
- When the night temperatures fall below 41F, keep the plants dry, never water.
- If you have them in a green house and are kept about 59F, water lightly whenever the plants are dry.

Light:

- For small plants < then 7 inches, no shade is required in winter. Late spring to October 30-40% shade for nice canes and green leaves.
- For medium size and flowering plants, no shade is necessary, plants will grow and bloom. In Florida, July and Aug , there might be the need for 30% shade so as not to burn the leave. It does get hot here. I grow in my pool cage year round which gives about 30%.
- If there is no breeze or air movement, you need 30-40% shade, otherwise buds will be damaged and flowering will be poor. 30% is recommended from the time buds appear until the end of the flowering period which is about end of April/Beg May.
- No shade is necessary if temperature is low and sunlight is weak.

Fertilizing:

- As mentioned above low nitrogen fertilizer should be used for flowing plants. Stop fertilizing after September if you want to have a lot of flowers.
- The best way to fertilize the small plants is with slow release for 7 months out of the year, and then remove it.

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Flowering:

Poor flowering in spite of robust growth and appearance of off shoots (kiekies) are the most common problem with nobile type dendrobiums.

- **Light and Air:** Provide plenty of light to flowering size plants. As long as there is good air circulation they can be grown without shade even in summer. If they burn or air circulation is not that good, use about 30% shade during very hot seasons. In any case from October on plants should be grown in full sun to produce strong canes and leaves to prepare them for flowering.
- **Fertilizer:** Most common cause of poor flowering with nobiles is the accumulation of too much nitrogen. Stop fertilizing in September. For flowering size plants use a fertilizer that is low in Nitrogen. Take the slow release out of the pot. I use packets of dynamite in stocking, then in the winter I can just take them off.
- **Temperature:** For differentiation of flower buds it is most important to expose the plant to low temperatures. The canes (pseudobulbs) that grew from Spring through Summer have matured in the fall and require 1 month of low temperatures. (We had that in November),

Summarize: Provide ample light and good air circulation, stop fertilizer in beginning of September, expose the plant to some low temperatures (Nov-Feb), you should have some flowers.

Potting Media, containers and reporting:

- Tree fern fiber, osmunda, fir bark, sphagnum moss and media used for Cattleyas may be used for Nobile type dendrobiums.
- A mixture of perlite (1-2 parts), and peat moss (1 part) with ph controller can also be used. A slightly acid medium (Ph 5) which drains well but still retains moisture is ideal.
- Clay pots are recommended for sphagnum moss or media which retain moisture. For other media which drain well, plastic pots will work.
- Pot sizes: small plant up to 3", a 2/5 inch post, 5" plant use 3" pot, for a 10" plant use a 4" pot. Over potting is not good for growth of small plants.

Flowering Plants:

- When grown properly, Nobile dendrobiums will reward you with heavy textured, big bright, deep colored flowers which last about 6 to 8 weeks. Yellow and Orange colored flowers require about 7-10 days to attain their colors. Wait until the flowers mature before moving the plant from the greenhouse to where you can enjoy the flowers.
- When in full bloom, flowers will last longer if placed in a cool, dry spot away from any draft of direct sunlight. A night temperature of 40-50F is ideal. So I keep mine out in the pool cage where I can see them through my door. If water during flowering, water enough to moisten the surface medium every 10 days and in the morning, then let dry before evening.

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Repotting after Flowering:

- Overgrown or large plant which have finished flower can be divided and repotted. This should be done only when night temperature is above 55F.
- To repot, remove any decayed medium, discolored, black or decaying roots by washing or shooting a jet of tap water; be careful not to damage live roots. Repot in a larger container. If the root ball has become small after your debridement, put it in a smaller pot. Only plants with 7-8 canes should be divided. Dividing a smaller plant will stifle the plant growth for the next year.
- After repotting, keep the plant relatively dry for the next two week. Water once every 3 -4 days to moisten the surface of the medium. When new roots appear the plant should be given ample time to soak water through the bottom of the pot. Keep the plant in 40% shade and away from direct sunlight for 3 weeks after transplanting.
- From spring to early summer, offshoots (kiekis) may appear on the upper nodes of the canes due to damage of new shoot by breaking, or slugs or excessive application of nitrogen. The kiekis which appear in the spring will produce thick canes and mature during the summer. When the roots are 3-3 1/2" long, the kieki can be removed. Use a sterile razor blade to excise the kieki from the cane. Soak the roots to soften them and put in a 3 inch pot depending on the size of the keiki.

Control of diseases and insecticides:

- Nobile Dendrobiums are rarely susceptible to most diseases, some disease such as "black spots" can occur. The common cause of this condition is high humidity with low temperature and also after lost glossy leave on the leaves, like sun or heat burn. The condition can be controlled with Benemyl or Thiram.
- During the dry part of summer, thrips, red spider mites and scales can attack the plants. Thrips and red spiders mites are minute insects and attach themselves to the under porting of the leave producing white powdering substances and may turn the leaves silver underneath. Mealy bugs can attack the young shoots. Malathion or Sevin can be used.