

AMAZING CYMBIDIUMS

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The cymbidium, native of the Himalayas make up the largest of the potted orchids and are best suited for home landscapes. The habitat of cymbidium orchid is sub tropical cool humid condition, between 500 – 1800m MSL. The plants exhibit sympodial growth. These orchids are also grouped as semi terrestrial orchids. They have cluster of spongy roots at the base of the stem, which is short, swollen and closely set in clusters. Each pseudobulb is sheathed with 2-4 long leathery leaves which is strap shaped. The flower spikes emerge from the base of the pseudobulb bearing numerous flowers. The spikes may be erect, semipendulous (arcuate) or pendulous. The flowers are fairly large, multi coloured, having irregular, waxy almost translucent petals with entire margin. The central portion is often contrast in colour. The boat shaped column is the unique feature hence, the name ‘boat orchid’.



The hybridization work in cymbidium was recorded in the later part of nineteenth century between the two common species *C. lowianum* and *C. eburneum* in England. After that many hybrids have developed and are available in wide range of colours, which could be used for breaking the monotony in home landscapes. The colour ranges from white, cream, yellow, bronze, green, gold or pink. Some important clones of Arunachal Pradesh, where the cut flower is grown extensively are:

- White : Jungfrau “Dos Pueblos”, Show girl “Cooks Bridge” and Camalex
- Pink : Orkney “Pink Heather”, Haley’s Comet “Aurora” and Dream girl “Gemini”
- Yellow : Angelica “December Gold”, Highland sunset “Plumpton”
- Green : Joyee Duncan “Susan Hughes”, Valley Zenith “Top spot” and Amesbury “Frank slattery”

These orchids can be grown in containers of different sizes. They perform well in different porous media capable of holding moisture, but needs drainage thoroughly. A mixture of peat, decomposed coir pith and charcoal bits of ½ to 1 cm in size in a ratio of 2:1:1 is found suitable for cymbidiums. They produce an extensive root system and

attain pot bound condition much faster than any other orchid species. Containers of sufficient capacity to hold at least two years growth may be selected. Plants with roots or back bulb are separated after its flowering and planted in the centre of the container. Adequate watering is essential since excessive dampness invite diseases. During summer months, the media should not dry up completely. Application of NPK @ 30:10:10 at 60 d interval helps in maintaining the soil fertility. In general, cymbidiums do not tolerate high level of fertilizers; care should be taken to avoid excess feeding.

Cymbidiums are found to perform well in cool humid conditions with temperature ranges from 8° to 24°C and they bloom at low temperature. Up to flowering stage, they can tolerate night temperature of 15°C and day temperature of 25°C. During the flower initiation phase, it requires a minimum night temperature of 14°C and maximum day temperature of 21°C. Spike initiation takes place when night temperature touches 10°C and the day not exceeding 20°C.

These orchids love diffused sunlight. In outdoor, they should be placed in location which receives checkered or diffused bright light. For indoor landscaping they may be placed on sills of South, East or West. Verandas located on the eastern side provide good morning sunshine and ventilation. Repotting is done invariably after three years. The floral spikes should be staked from initiation till harvest for a nice display of flowers. A few common pests like scale insect, mealy bug, aphid and mites and diseases like root rot and leaf spot may appear which needs to be attended regularly.

Cymbidium hybrids are available in wide range of colours, which could be used for breaking the monotony in home landscapes. Cultivation of cymbidium as a hobby can even turn into commercial enterprise as the price of cut flowers of cymbidium ranges from Rs.45/- to Rs.125/- depends on the quality, colour, number and size of florets in the spike. From an area of 500 m², an annual return of Rs.62,500 could be made from cut spikes alone, which is certainly an attractive enterprise and an alternate source of income for small growers.