

## Don't water your Phalaenopsis if roots are green. Wait until they turn silver!

By Jay Balchan

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*Phalaenopsis* orchids are the number one selling "pot plant" in the country with flowers lasting up to 4 months. Here are some basics for growing and reblooming:

Watering is the most important area of care with overwatering the surest way to send it to compost. Rather than following various "ice cube" recommendations, water your plant when it needs water. *Phals* are usually potted in a clear pot inside a decorative pot. If the roots in the bottom third of the liner pot are deep green, do not water. If they are silver to match the top roots, it's time to water. Water by soaking the plant overnight in a cereal bowl in the sink, probably every 2 to 3 weeks.



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Fertilize with a 1/4 tsp/gal treatment every other watering with any balanced fertilizer or sprinkle a very light dose (1/2 tsp) of time-release fertilizer 2x per year.



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*Phals* do not suffer from many diseases. If you see critters, use a solution of 1/2 water and 1/2 rubbing alcohol with a dash of soap. Spray every other day until all bugs are gone.

*Phals* are usually planted in sphagnum moss, which lasts 2 to 3 years. To repot use a bark-based orchid mix in a clay pot. Put some Styrofoam peanuts in the bottom quarter. Trim off dead roots and firm the mix around the remaining roots. Clay pots dry out faster than plastic pots so you may need to water more frequently using the same cereal bowl soaking technique.

*Phals* need a 20-degree temperature drop to initiate a bloom spike. If your plant is not reblooming, try placing it outside under cover in the fall when the nights are in the upper 50s for 7 to 10 days.

To maximize flower duration, avoid places where your A/C can directly blow on the flowers or near ripening fruit.

Don't throw your Phal away after it has stopped blooming. It's easy to grow and can reward you every year with new blooms!

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