

SUMMER CYMBIDIUM CARE in SAN DIEGO

Cymbidium orchids are bold, dramatic, potentially huge orchids that make great container plants for San Diego patio gardens, entryways, and microclimates that do not get hot in summer. One of the main keys to successful *Cymbidium* orchid reblooming is keeping them cool and watered through the summer months.

Cymbidium orchids prefer cooler temperatures all year long, without any frosts or freezing. Why is this? Well, I like to emphasize the notion that the goal for any type of gardening is to reproduce your plant's native habitat. And here our goal is a reblooming *Cymbidium* orchid. Easy!

The native habitat of most *Cymbidium* orchids is typically high elevations in tropical and subtropical areas of Southeast Asia; it doesn't get too hot in these environments. *Cymbidium* orchids do not live in trees like many epiphytic orchids (e.g. *Phalaenopsis*, *Cattleya*), and they do not grow in soil like carrots and cucumbers do. Instead they grow in loose leaf litter on the ground.

Furthermore, it rains during summer in their native habitat. Therefore, we must provide cool temperatures and sufficient water during summer for our *Cymbidium* orchids to rebloom later during the winter/spring months.

The frost-free areas along the west coast of North America (that is, right on the coast) provide an ideal environment to grow and rebloom *Cymbidium* orchids. It's not too hot, and as long as you water during summer and repot every few years, *Cymbidium* orchids very reliably rebloom.

During summer while plants are growing leaves, water your *Cymbidium* orchids more frequently and fertilize. "How often should I water?" That depends on your growing situation: size of containers, size of plant, how long it's been since you repotted, etc. Well maintained huge specimens in large pots may only need water once a week. A large plant struggling in a one gallon pot may need water every few days during summer months.

If you have not repotted your *Cymbidium* orchids in more than 4-5 years, do it now! It's best to repot when the new growth of leaves is still small. Remember *Cymbidium* orchids bloom in winter/spring (depending on the variety). Therefore, the longer you wait to repot in the calendar year, the more you could risk your orchid not reblooming that year. For more specifics, and

detailed step-by-step instructions, see pages 57-66 in the “Repotting” section in Chapter 2 of my book *How Orchids Rebloom*.

Watch for new growth! For almost all orchids, if you see new leaves growing, it is your signal to water more often. When you water, water the potting media, not the plant! Once new growths are mature and the pseudobulbs have fully formed, reduce watering frequency. Greatly reduce watering frequency once spikes emerge in winter/spring.