

# paphiopedilium

**PAPHIOPEDILUM** paf-ee-oh-PED-ih-lum

The distinctive pouch-like lip of the slipper orchid has long intrigued orchid fanciers. Paphiopedilums are not carnivorous. The pouch acts as a trap for pollinators, preventing their easy escape and guiding them past the pollen masses.

The word “Paphiopedilum” derives from the Greek *paphos*, meaning “Venus,” and *pedilon*, “sandal.”

About 60 species of Paphiopedilum exist in the Asian tropics from India to the Philippines. Most are terrestrial inhabitants of the shady forest floor and are often found growing in the crevices of limestone rocks. Slipper orchids also occur in the Temperate Zone (genus *Cypripedium*) and the South American tropics (*Phragmipedium*).

Paphiopedilums are particularly vulnerable to overcollection for the horticultural trade. Some species now exist only in the most remote, inaccessible part of their range.

**Temperature** | Most species appreciate night temperatures between 58° and 62° and day temperatures ranging from 70° to 85°. A difference between night and day temperatures of ten to fifteen degrees is beneficial.

**Light** | Paphiopedilum, like other denizens of the forest floor, thrive under conditions of shade to bright light. Indoors an east window with some weak morning sun is best. Strong light or full sun for extended periods will cause the leaves to yellow.

**Potting** | Paphiopedilum do not resent repotting as many epiphytic orchids do. The Atlanta Botanical Garden repots Paphs every year in a fine fir bark, peat moss and perlite mixture. A small amount of lime is added to the soil, since many species grow naturally on limestone. Paphs can be grown in clay or plastic pots. Repot after flowering.

**Water** | Like many other terrestrial orchids Paphiopedilum lack pseudobulbs and are therefore unable to store moisture that would enable them to survive periods of drought. Water when the surface of the soil turns a lighter shade of brown; they should never be allowed to become bone dry.

**Fertilizer** | use a half-strength balanced fertilizer (equal parts nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium) year-round.



*Paphiopedilum illeianum*

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