

## MCBEAN'S ORCHIDS

### Growing Orchids from Flasks

McBeans do not sell plants which have been removed from the wild though we do collect small amounts of seed, subject to legal restrictions. The majority of seed used, however, is from pollination of plants on the nursery.

Most of our plants have been produced on the nursery in the laboratory. They may be grown from seed, in which case there will be some variation among the plants (as with human siblings, each will be unique) or by tissue culture (cloning), when each is identical to its parent.

The young orchid plantlets thus produced are grown in sterile nutrient jelly; there are usually several stages to this process which may involve the transfer of plantlets from one particular growing medium to another, depending on the stage of development.

The flasks which we sell from McBeans will always be in the final stage of the process (unless you ask us otherwise) and will be ready for removal from the sterile environment and potting. The minimum number of plantlets in each flask is stated in the product listing on the web store.

#### *Timing of the removal of the plantlets from the flask*

Removal need not be carried out immediately; as long as there is room in the jar, the deflasking can be deferred for a few weeks. The ideal time to remove the plantlets will vary according to species; as a general rule it is best to deflask when mature plants of that particular species are in growth rather than dormant so that 'synchronisation' can occur. In practice, this will normally indicate Spring or Autumn as the best times.

#### *Compost & Pots*

It is essential that the compost used remains well aerated and free-draining.

For most hardy or Mediterranean orchids we would recommend 1 part John Innes No.1 to 4 parts of inorganic material (such as fine grit, coarse sand, perlite). The major exception to this rule of thumb is *dactylorhiza*, where a mix of 3 parts peat to 1 part perlite is not unusual.

For the intermediate and houseplant orchids, our own Sphagnum Mix is ideal.

If in doubt, call 01273 400228 for advice.

On the nursery we use small plastic pots which reduce the risk of overwatering.

If you are deflasking hardy or Mediterranean orchids at home you might consider larger pots with several plantlets in each (community pots); this system provides a more stable environment and gives you a little more forgiveness in watering/inspection frequency. Community pots can also be used for the smaller intermediate/houseplant seedlings

#### *Potting procedure*

Have on hand: some kitchen paper and a pencil.

Prepare your compost; it should be moist, not sodden. If using a sphagnum mix, you need rainwater.

Unscrew the lid and ease the contents out onto the kitchen paper. Ease the plants apart as gently as you can and clean off as much of the gel as you can without damage.

For single planting, take an empty pot and position the plant so that the junction of root and shoot is just below the rim. Loosely fill the pot with moist compost, firming gently with your fingers.

For community planting, fill the large pot with compost and use the pencil to dib holes around the perimeter, placing a single plant in each. Lightly firm.

Stand the pots in an area where they can be given a drenching of mild fungicide and drain well.

### *Aftercare*

Being quite young and tender and needing fairly humid conditions, the newly-potted plants are ideally sited in a propagator or frame. They need to be kept safe from high light levels and extremes of temperature and draughts; comfortably warm is fine.

Most importantly, they should not be allowed to dry out completely.

Begin watering after a couple of weeks but only if the compost is nearly dry. Check daily if possible for any sign of fungus; remove any infected plant with a little of the surrounding compost. If several plants have been affected, remove them and re-apply a mild fungicide drench.

After a couple of months the plants should have established a root system; include McBean's fertiliser in three out of four waterings. No feed is necessary for hardy and Mediterranean orchids for up to one year.

For the first couple of weeks no ventilation is necessary; thereafter progressively increase ventilation round the plants.

After about 6 months your plants should be ready for re-potting in fresh compost and progressive introduction to the environmental regime of the more senior plants of the species.