



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Seasonal Tips for Cymbidiums

Cymbidiums in Cold Weather

November and December

by Harry McElroy, cymbidiuman@msn.com

For 14 of the 19 years I lived in Jacksonville Florida, carrying cymbidiums in to a warm area during cold snaps was a winter ritual. It was fine when I had just a few (like 400 to 500), but became a chore after I got more. My 'warm space' just would not hold them all as the collection grew to 2500+, plus it was just too much work. Alternatives were explored through growers in California, New Zealand and Australia. Some general methods for surviving cold came from this international network of cymbidiums enthusiasts.

- ✦ Build a greenhouse or shelter area big enough to hold the whole collection. Cymbidiums like to be exposed to the elements so an enclosed greenhouse was out. I chose the alternative which is a shade house which can be enclosed on the sides. An overhead mist system was installed which lightly mists the collection. My thermostat opens the valve for the mist system at 33 to 34 degrees. The mist system also serves as a cooling and water system in the summer. Sides of shade house are covered with frost blanket. The top has 30% shade cloth which remains in place year round. Side frost blanket rolls up in the summer. This system has kept my cymbidiums from freezing for the past 5 years. Cymbidium canaliculatum and its hybrids are the only cymbidiums I take in, not because of the cold but because this species does not like the water from the mist systems and needs to stay dry in the winter time (like a catasetum)
- ✦ Cover the plants with a frost blanket and put a string of Christmas tree lights under the blanket.

Note: DO NOT mix method 1 and method 2. Electricity and water do not mix. This method is not good when it rains.

My cymbidiums have not been in an enclosed winter space for the past 5 years. Finding a way to cope with cold has allowed my collection to grow because it makes this genus easier to grow than all the other genera.

The freezing weather hits Southern California too, though not so often. Read how the renowned Batchmans protected their cymbidiums during [freezing weather](#).