

**Home and Backyard Orchid Growing**  
Leslie and Chip Brickell, [lesliewbrickell@gmail.com](mailto:lesliewbrickell@gmail.com)  
July 2016



Leslie's Orchid House is right at home amongst her outdoor plantings of perennials and roses adjacent to a sitting and repotting area under a pergola where more orchids like to hang out.

Leslie and Chip Brickell have lived in their home in St. Johns on Julington Creek for many years, long before development in the area exploded. You know the moment you turn into the driveway that this is the home of a gardener extraordinaire, just take a look around the yard and all the manicured beds of blooming perennials and roses.



The Atlas greenhouse is a polycarbonate structure covered in 65% shade cloth, complete with water wall for summer cooling and furnace for winter heating.

Leslie enjoys growing orchids on mounts as well as in pots. All orchids in the greenhouse are hand watered, with mounted orchids misted daily.

Leslie and Chip did a lot of research before selecting their Atlas greenhouse. They decided on a single wall polycarbonate structure covered with 65% shade cloth. The two interior American Coolair circulation fans run 24 hours, 7 days a week.

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There are a number of thermostats set to control internal temperatures during both warm and cool weather.

- ★ To cool the greenhouse during warm weather, there are two intake fans that work in conjunction with the water wall. When the temperatures rise to 80°F, the fan closer to the pergola comes on and draws air in from the outside. This pushes hot air from the greenhouse out through the water wall, which is not circulating water at this temperature. This fan continues to operate until the temperatures drop below 80°F. If temperatures continue to rise above 85°F, the second intake fan comes on and the pump for the water wall is triggered to turn on, so water begins to circulate in the water wall dropping temperatures inside the greenhouse through evaporative cooling. The fans and water wall operate until temperatures drop below the present maximum.
- ★ During cooler weather, a thermostat controls the opening and closing of the upper exhaust vent and fan. When temperatures rise to 70°F, the vent opens so built up heat in the greenhouse can be exhausted. The vent shuts down and the fan turns off when temperatures drop back below 70°F. If temperatures drop below 53°F, the two electric heaters with internal thermostats turn on and continue to operate until the internal greenhouse temperature rises above the preset minimum.

The greenhouse is watered by hand. A Dosatron proportioner is used for automatically injecting fertilizer into the irrigation water. Leslie's water is from a deep well and produces very high quality water, relatively low in alkalinity and dissolved solids so a Cal Mag fertilizer works well for her. She waters her mounted orchids daily and potted orchids several times a week during the warm season. Leslie has all kinds of orchids in the greenhouse, cattleyas, dendrobiums, bulbophyllums, oncidiums as well as some unusual orchids like paraphalaenopsis.



Leslie enjoys matching unusual pieces of driftwood or mounts to the orchids she grows.



Look at all that bench space, the envy of growers everywhere!

Vandas, bulbophyllums and other orchids are also grown outside under the pergola where an overhead misting system waters the area once or twice a day. This area is a shady and relaxing area for sitting and enjoying the view as well as for working at the repotting bench.

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Vandas and mounted orchids grow in the pergola equipped with a spray system.  
The area doubles as a potting area and a relaxing sitting area.

What a wonderful thing to have all that available bench space. Rumor has it that there are regular deliveries of orchids to help Leslie fill the greenhouse, what fun! You can see Leslie's Orchid House on the front cover of the Atlas 2016 catalogue, it won first place in their 2016 Photo Contest with Terry's photograph, simply beautiful.