

Home and Backyard Orchid Growing

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Mike and Kaycee Heinz grow orchids in a greenhouse year round. Some of his plants get moved outdoors during the warm months and benefit greatly from their outdoor stay. Here's a picture of Mike with his Coel. flaccida 'Gene's Outdoor Priveatta' which received the cultural award CCM from AOS at the Daytona show in 2008.

There are a lot of reasons to grow plants outside in Florida. The main reason for me is the plants get rainwater, almost constant air motion, and natural sunlight.

I can't control the air or the rain, but I can position my plants so they get the sunlight I want them to receive. The first rule to putting plants outside is to acclimatize them to the different level of light than they get during the winter months. I first put the plants under the oak trees, because they have a full canopy of shade, then I move them either further



away from the trunk or under a pine tree. The pines have less filtering ability, but they also drop a lot of pine needles.

The second thing to think about is will uncontrolled rainwater hurt my plant? The plants with a crown like paphs, phrags, and phals are not good plants to put outside unless you angle the pot so water will run out of the crown. Water left in the crown will be a wonderful breeding ground for bacteria, and rot your plant from the top down.

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I have made use of old store displays to hang my plants outside. The beauty of these is racks that come winter, I just roll the whole display back into the greenhouse. If you want to know the easiest way to do something, ask a lazy man how to do it. The other advantage to

using display racks on wheels is you can move them to where ever the sun is the right level for what the plant needs, and is acclimated to.

As you can see in my pictures, I have run wire from tree to tree for about 250 feet of hanging space. I used 3/16 in. plastic coated wire for strength and the fact that the hooks won't slip as easily on the plastic. I also use clothes pins to keep the plant separated. This wire gives me room to hang about 300 plants outside. I have watched the



sun's travel over the wires, so I know where the highest light levels are, and how long they get that level. All my vanda tribe, all the encyclia plants, and a lot of the cattleya family go outside.

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When winter starts to show up I bring plants back in before they experience nights that are too cold for them.

One problem I can't seem to fix is the furry-tailed rats, commonly called squirrels. They have made a habit of tasting the plants thinking they are nuts, and eating just enough to kill the plant, before they discover they aren't good to eat.

Enjoy your plants, and if you can, let them enjoy the thrill of growing outside. They do like it, and will reward you with more growth.

