

# Home and Backyard Orchid Growing

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June 2009, updated January 2011

## Winter Growing Area



As you can see from the pictures, I enclose a section of our large porch with plastic. I have built frames from 1x2's and covered them with 16 mil, clear plastic. They are held in place with a couple sheet metal screws and the original screening is left in place. This clear plastic is used on the outside walls to allow as much natural light as possible to shine through. It is actually a fairly good light level for maintaining growth. Though not too good for initiating budding (this is on the east end

of our house and gets sunlight from sunrise until about 11 am). I supplement the light with an incandescent bulb for the few winter bloomers that I have and use fluorescent tubes for the phals. Lights on phals are on 14 hours a day. There are 6 plants, and 5 have spikes. I am anxious for weather to break so that I can move them closer to the window area and begin a training effort on the spikes.

I should point out that I have a homemade sliding window arrangement that allows fresh air to be brought in and circulated with an oscillating fan. I use a thermostat controlled ceramic (electric) heater to maintain a temp about 52-54 F. My fan is on a timer as are the lights. I open the area to fresh air anytime that the temps get around 50, and if the forecast is for a low of 50 I turn the heater off and leave the area open. I have piped water into the porch from an outside bib. I still water mostly from one gallon jugs with fertilizer. But if I am to be gone for extended periods the neighbor just uses the spray attachment once per week lightly, just to give the plants a break.



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Last year I had much trouble due to poor watering habits, no fresh air so the plants were not as clean as they should be. This year, I am better trained (thanks Sue & SAOS), I do not dip multiple plants in the same bucket of water. I have narrowed my collection to catts, dendros, nodosa and just a few thin leaf plants. I was gone for 11+ days in early January and when I did my complete check this past weekend, I find several buds/new growths etc. A nodosa that I have struggled with has 15-16 spikes. Another that I thought was

something else is blooming very well. The dendrobiums that are shown have been blooming since October.

Overall things have gone very well. That is BAD.....makes me want more plants!

### Summer Growing Area

Since moving to Florida in 2001, I have missed my Sunday morning excursions to my basement greenhouse where I had maintained nearly 100 phals in a light garden environment for several years. It was very normal for me to have 40-50 blooming at one time or another from spring through summer. When I moved to Florida, I brought 15-16 plants with me, most of which I killed by too much care or improper care. I do have a



very special cattleya with the tag missing that has been divided and that I have rebloomed sporadically. In 2007, I attended the Jax spring show, bought 6 phals and got hooked all over again. In the spring of 2008 I attended and later joined the

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SAOS. Naturally, I began collecting again and have settled on catts and other more bright light alliances to gather and nurture.

I grow on a covered porch that has an east southeast exposure with full sun beginning at sunup and lasting until noon. My plants (now numbering about 40) are placed on humidity trays or open shelving with large flat plastic trays below to catch run through. All watering is done from premixed solutions poured from gallon jugs, tedious but less messy. I try very hard to keep the overflow to a minimum when watering due to the really ugly color of Inoculaid and Orchid Pro. Because of this, I have very few plants hanging. Drainage is one reason and reduced light would be the other. The higher I hang them, the less light they receive.

After several visits to Bottom Gardens and checking out The Oleander Tree, I started moving a very few plants into hanging pots or mounts and hanging them in my south facing (small) Live Oak Tree. That worked very well, so I bought more....DUH! These plants are watered with a hose and fed by immersion in a bucket of runoff from the porch. (I should note that all of my runoff is used to water houseplants and/or blooming plants around the house foundation).



I recently was faced with a small dilemma regarding my small hanging collection. I had made plans to have a surgical process that might keep me in the hospital for as much as 14 days. After visiting Bottom Gardens for a Keiki Club meeting and seeing the awning style shade areas that Terry had created, I decided I needed something like that to make it easier for my wife (a non-gardener) to care for things while I was away. I had a 12-13 ft wall that faced southeast that seemed like a natural

location. But I was concerned about attachment to the house and local community rules within our gated community. Then, Voila! On a tour through the Home Depot garden area I found rolls of shade cloth in 3 different colors. I hesitated to buy without having a plan so back home I went. After a brief survey, it appeared that my AC compressor screened area might offer a solution. I made a couple sketches, got the wife's approval and went shopping.

I bought a 6 ft x 25 ft roll of 70% shading which is more than I was looking for but it was there and ready to use. They also had snap on clips. The material is of a non-tearing nature which allows cutting. I bought 2" PVC pipe and made a framework by setting poles down inside the 4 x 4 posts. I made it as tall as I could without obstructing a window. The material is fastened to the PVC frame with the purchased clips, cable ties and bungee cords. All of the PVC is loose fit so it can be disassembled easily and quickly. Plants are hung on a hurriedly scavenged 2 x 4 with hook eyes (I will refine that soon). I finished this little project 2 days before my

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hospital visit. According to my light meter I am in the 3000-4000 ft candle range, the area is 5 x 8 ft and the cost was about \$90.



The area is in full sun from sunup until about noon. As the heat picks up I can move the plants more toward the house wall and reduce sun exposure. It seems that I may be able to accommodate 25-30 plants in the area without obstructing air flow to the compressor. I have a hose nearby and simply spray every 3-4 days depending on weather conditions. Every other week I hand pour or dip fertilizer. I am still experimenting but I am very happy with the results. The Cattleyas are spiking

and one of the Dendrobiums has 2 spikes and nearly 25 blooms. There are also 2 vanda/asco types with many new roots and new growths at the top. All in all, this little project has worked out very well and will only hurt my budget.