



Shade House Backyard Orchid Growing
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Janis decided to build a shade house with her husband's help for her new orchid growing hobby in 2016. Most of her orchids had summered on her lanai or hung out under the oak trees. With the frequent traveling they were doing and the growing collection, it became time to consider a structure adaptable to a programmed watering system and capable of winterizing her plants. So Janis convinced her husband Alan, that they could build a 16' x 16' shade house with a polycarbonate roof. Alan installed a control panel that offered flexibility to water sections of the shade house on different schedules. The front 4' x 16' section with no solid roof holds her vandas, catasetums and schomburgkias which receive a daily misting every morning. The interior 12' x 16' section is divided in half with benched and hanging plants on one side being watered every 3-5 days depending upon the season. This section is under 70% shade cloth during the summer. The other half has mounted and hanging plants that are watered every other day under 50% shade cloth. Also in this section, along the back wall, Janis built a potting table with shelves. She currently uses an outdoor ceiling fan which continuously circulates air 24 hours.

In the colder months, Janis puts up plastic sheeting on the two 12' sides and brings in the outside plants. She has two curtains installed on the 16' longer sides. Initially both curtains were on hand cranks and Janis would monitor the weather and crank the curtains up and down to keep the shade house cool during the sunny daytime and warm enough, using a propane heater, during the evenings. After the first year, an automatic system was installed and now the front curtain lowers and raises itself based on the shade house's internal temperature. If the internal temperature gets above 63, the front curtain automatically rises cooling off the shade house. When it falls below 60, the curtain lowers and shuts the cool air out. Once the temperature hits 53, the heater comes on. The shade house watering and heating system has worked out well and it also received no damage during the last two hurricanes. However all the orchids were moved into the house garage along with the aluminum orchid benches just in case.



Top row: Construction, Polycarbonate roof screwed on, Five tons of pea gravel waiting to be moved in for floor.
Bottom row: Curtain installed, Curtain up and plants added, Shade screen added to front vertical (curtain down)



Ready for hurricane



Auto curtain motor inside tube



Hand crank for curtain tube



Open roof area for vandas, etc.



Shade house in relationship to lanai



View from bench area towards every other day misting area.



Misting area, potting table, and watering control panel on wall



View of bench area. Lower right shows heater under table