

Home and Backyard Orchid Growing

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October, 2009



When I first started growing orchids, I had no idea of where to grow them, but a friend said she'd been growing hers hanging in a tree on the east side of her house. I had a Palatka Holly on the southwest corner, so there I chose to grow. My first love was vandas and they loved the late light coming in from the west. So I kept adding to the holly.

Then I joined the Orchid Society and caught the Orchid Obsession disease. Once you find you can rebloom an orchid, you succumb! The holly tree finally ran out of branches that I could reach and I began looking for someplace else. I saw some pot clip plant hangers at a nursery and thought they'd work pretty well, so I added them on our bell pole. Well, that only took twelve plants. So, I spread out onto the front of our house. That gave me about a dozen more. In the meantime I'd found I could rebloom cattleyas as well as vandas!



What to do? My wonderful husband came up with the idea to use an open space under oak trees. I got more pot clips, we planted three 4x4's the length of the garage and decided that just putting the poles in with twelve plants each didn't leave us any place to hang the vandas. So we added 1 1/4" PVC poles at the top of the 4x4's. That was great until SAOS got

the light meter and we found out that there wasn't enough light there for the vandas. So we put hangers on the south side of the house 3 feet apart under oak trees. That gave us lots of places to hang the vandas and they love it there! Then the light meter came back and said "The best light you have for vandas is along the trees in the back yard". The space between the trees was such that we had to add three 4x4's (12 plants each) between each tree. With the PVC on top and connected to the trees we now had 36 feet to hang Vandas and six 4x4's. I was in heaven! Our watering system was modified slightly so we could water everything and I didn't even have to do that! Then the fall came! Hurricane! Well, I took all the plants on the poles and laid them under our large azaleas in the back yard. The vandas we left alone. We figured if they like breezes, they'd love the



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hurricane! They barely moved, for which I'm very thankful! The vandas get watered for ½ hour every morning along with some of the phals and dendrobiums. The rest get watered once a week and fertilized shortly after being watered. After a while we noticed that one set of PVC poles was coming apart so we took a page from Mike Heinz and

replaced the PVC with coated wire. Love it and the hangers fit better! We keep stuff from sliding by putting clothes pins between plants.

Then the temperature started dropping and it was time to move the tribes into the greenhouse! I had built my greenhouse several years ago from a basic carport frame from Sams, to which I added 2x2's at each pole and braces in between. To begin with the frame was covered with 6 mil plastic which was fine for a couple years, but when it started disintegrating I replaced the sides with fiberglass panels and added a door on the end. The top triangle at each end of the building, I took off during warm weather to let the breeze blow through. I tried heavy plastic as a roof but it had to be replaced every couple years, so I finally made PVC panels for the roof. The first year I simply hung my vandas from a piece of pipe running the length of the greenhouse. The second year I added another pipe and so the story goes. I now have four pipes, two on each side and sit the ones that don't have a lot of roots on my shelves. The four shelves on each side sit on graduated cinder blocks, so there's lots of room. I separate the dendrobiums that need to be dry all winter. The rest get watered twice a week! I fertilize in the greenhouse only once every six weeks and then use it lightly.



Until this year, I've been taking all the orchids into the greenhouse as soon as the temperature starts to drop near 50°F, which is the minimum for vandas. However, much to my delight, most of the others can be left out until it reaches 40°F or even 35°F in some cases. So, when it gets near 50°F, I'll put the vandas in and wait for the others. Phals need a week or two exposure to cool weather (around 50°F) to induce new bloom spikes. Cattleyas and dendrobiums can stand it right down to 40°F. When they go in the greenhouse I usually clean up the pots if they need it and cut off any pseudobulbs that

are no longer adding to the plant. Also, I usually group those I think might need repotting the following spring.

