

Growing Mounted Orchids: A Crash Course

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- I. **Why Grow Mounted Orchids?**
 - A. Mounted orchids are nearly impossible to over-water
 - B. Mounted orchids seldom need repotting or remounting (if at all)
 - C. 75-80% of all orchids are true epiphytes in the wild, and naturally grow "mounted"
 - D. Mounting orchids optimizes root health, and healthy roots mean a healthy plant
 - E. Mounted orchids are aesthetically pleasing
 - F. Mounted orchids usually have fewer pests and disease

- II. **What Kinds of Orchids Can Be Mounted?**
 - A. Only epiphytic orchids can be mounted
 - B. Orchid genera that *should not* be mounted (this is why it's a good idea to make sure you know what you're mounting):
 1. Paphiopedilum, Phragmipedium, & Cypripedium
 2. Ludisia & Goodyera
 3. Phaius, Gastrorchis, and Spathoglottis
 4. Bletilla & Bletia
 5. Cymbidium*

- III. **What Should I Mount My Orchids On?**
 - A. Natural materials:
 1. Manzanita or other, very hard, wood with bark (ideal)
 2. Cork oak bark (also ideal)
 3. Tree fern fiber (ok if you have a greenhouse)
 4. Burnt grapewood (ok, but breaks down faster)
 5. Melaleuca (ok, but breaks down extremely quickly)
 6. Living trees (perfect)
 7. Rocks—great for many orchids, particularly the Brazilian rupicolous Laelias
 - B. Synthetic materials

- IV. **How Should I Water My Mounted Orchids?**
 - A. Pressurized water
 1. Pressure sprayer (ok for small collections)
 2. Hose (ok for orchids that can tolerate tap water)
 - B. "Good" water:
 1. Reverse osmosis water ("RO"-optimal)
 2. Deionized water ("DI"-great for most orchids)
 3. Distilled water (ok, but low in nutrients)
 4. Well water (also usually good)
 - C. Fertilizing mounted orchids:
 1. Best when done regularly with diluted quantities
 2. Most professional orchid growers fertilize with injectors, *every* time they water

- V. **What Materials Do I Need to Mount Orchids?**
- A. Fishing line, fine string, or thread (10 lb. fishing line is great)
 - B. Mounting "substrate" (see part III.)
 - C. Sphagnum moss, matched to the watering needs of the orchid:
 - 1. Green moss for drier growers
 - 2. White (New Zealand) moss for plants needing more moisture
 - D. Electrical staples (with caution)
 - E. Nails (bendless/masonry nails for hanging mounts on stucco, regular galvanized wood nails for having something to tie the fishing line around on trees), if necessary
 - F. Picture hanging wire or stiff stainless steel wire
 - G. Root stimulator solution or powder; use pressure sprayer for application
- VI. **What Should I Do to Maintain My Mounted Orchids?**
- A. Water them *frequently* (more in hotter, drier weather and less in cooler, humid weather)
 - B. Water them with "good water" and a very dilute fertilizer mixture
 - C. Tie moss over exposed roots as necessary
 - D. Leave them alone—therein lies the beauty of growing mounted orchids
- VII. **What Should I Do to Maintain Mounted Orchids after They Have Overgrown Their Mounts?**
- A. Make divisions to give to your friends and family (use clean razor blades and *small* amounts of potting sulphur over the cut area)
 - B. Try to prevent this situation in the first place by using a large enough piece of mounting material when you initially mount the orchid
 - C. *Carefully* remove mounted orchids from original mount and re-mount
 - D. Leave them alone—therein lies the beauty of growing mounted orchids
- VIII. **Tips for Mounting Orchids:**
- A. *Respect the form of the plant*—give orchids with rambling rhizomes an appropriate distance to grow and only mount plants on the kind of mounts that look right for them
 - B. *Use extra hands if necessary*—when mounting orchids, make sure your own tactile abilities do not prevent the plant from being mounted properly
 - C. *Make sure the new growths are in contact with the moss and the mount*—mount orchids with the new growths contacting the mount and cover their roots and rhizomes by the moss, without covering the new growths themselves
 - D. *Use the right amount of moss for your growing conditions*—make sure you use enough moss for the plant to be established. Use more moss if you water less, or if the plant is a faster or wetter grower, or if you live in a particularly dry area