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Orchids becoming year-round bloomer

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Once exclusive to greenhouses, orchids have emerged in recent years as a popular houseplant. Sales of potted orchids were \$47 million a decade ago, but they've tripled in sales since then, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Orchids naturally bloom between February and May, but growers have learned to produce flowers year-round. You can bring one of these beautiful plants into your home for \$20 to \$50; find them at Home Depot, Lowe's, plant nurseries and even some supermarkets.

Orchid care

- ☒ Bright light, no direct sun. Inside, an east, west or shaded south window; outside, on the patio or under trees for the summer months.
- ☒ Mature plants need a 15 to 20 degree difference between night and day. Ideally, night temperatures should be between 60 and 65; days 75 to 85.
- ☒ Mature plants should seldom dry out between waterings. Seedlings need more attention to moisture.
- ☒ Use a balanced — 10-10-10, 12-12-12 or similar ratio — fertilizer, "weakly, weekly." That is, fertilize every week at one-quarter to one-half of the recommended dilution.

For more information visit: American Orchid Society, www.orchidweb.org.