

oncidium orchid



Photo courtesy of The John Henry Company

ONCIDIUM
DANCING-LADY ORCHID, BUTTERFLY ORCHID

BOTANICAL NAME

Oncidium spp. (on-SID-ee-um)

COMMON NAMES

Dancing ladies, Dancing dolls, Dancing-lady orchid, Dancing-doll orchid, Butterfly orchid

DESCRIPTION

Most *Oncidiums* are found in sprays, with dozens of delicate florets that are 1 to 1.5 inches across blooming along a central branching stem.

COLORS

Most *Oncidiums* have multicolored blossoms. Yellow and brown is the most common combination although there are a few species that have red, maroon, green and white colorings.

CONSUMER LIFE

Oncidium blooms can last from 15 to 25 days or longer, depending upon the care the plants receive.

AVAILABILITY

Oncidium plants are available year-round.

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Bright, indirect light is best. Inadequate light levels will result in spindly stems and thin leaves with few or no flowers. Keeping the plants in east or west windows in the summer and fall, and south windows in the winter and early spring will give them plenty of light to thrive. Extended exposure to strong light or abrupt exposure to high temperatures in the presence of strong light can quickly cause permanent sunburn.

quality checklist

BLOOMS Check for signs of discoloration on petals, which indicates old flowers or temperatures that are too low.

FOLIAGE Avoid plants that show blackening on foliage.



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WATER Water every five to seven days, allowing the potting medium to dry slightly between waterings.

TEMPERATURE Most *Oncidium* plants require warmth to grow and flower. A temperature range of 70 F to 85 F during the day and 60 F to 65 F at night will satisfy the needs of most hybrids. Lower temperatures during blooming will make the flowers last longer. The plants should be stored at temperatures no lower than 55 F.

HUMIDITY Humidity levels should be high. Humidity can be increased by placing the plants on pebble trays.

FERTILIZER Apply an orchid fertilizer at each watering when there is active growth. Otherwise, fertilize at every other or third watering. Allow the excess water to drain freely.

REPOTTING Do not repot *Oncidiums* unless the new growth has come out of the pots or the medium has decomposed.

GROOMING Remove individual flowers as they fade. If lower leaves turn yellow, they can be removed without damaging the plants.

challenges

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Oncidiums* show little sensitivity to ethylene gas.

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME "*Oncidium*" comes from the Greek word "onkos," meaning "tumor" or "swelling." It refers to the warty callus of the lip of the florets.

FAMILY *Oncidiums* are members of the *Orchidaceae* family.

ORIGINS The plants are native to Central and South America.

HISTORY The genus was established in 1800 by Olaf Swartz, who chose *Oncidium variegatum* as the original name.

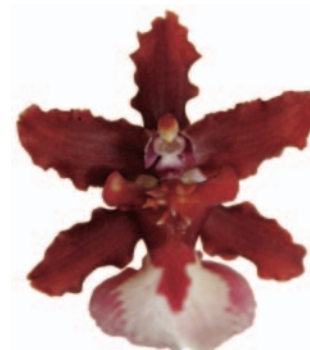


Photo courtesy of McLellan Botanicals

ONCIDIUM 'SHARRY BABY'
DANCING-LADY ORCHID,
BUTTERFLY ORCHID

PESTS Wash off any spider mites, aphids and mealybugs with insecticidal soap. You also can dab rubbing alcohol directly onto mealybugs with cotton swabs. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenet.org
Flowers and Plants Association, www.flowers.org.uk
The North of England Orchid Society
www.orchid.org.uk/dendcult.htm
Kauai Orchids, www.kauaiorchids.com
Aloha Orchid Nursery, www.alohaorchid.com

Reach "Blooming Plant of the Month" writer Steven W. Brown, AIFD, at sbfloral@aol.com or (415) 239-3140.

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