

## Deciduous Calanthes

This is a group of orchids, which we do not see very often. It is notable for being the genus, that produced the first man made orchid hybrid: *Cal. sylvatica* x *Cal. triplicate* = **Cal. Dominyi** (registered by Veitch in 1856).

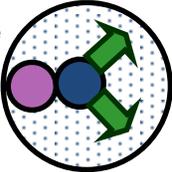
Up through the 1960s & '70s, in Europe these were grown in large numbers, with their gracefully arching flower spikes producing cut flowers for the Christmas season. As a cut flower the inflorescence lasts 2-3 weeks; on the bulb they last at least twice as long, since the buds open progressively up the stem.

### *Calanthe vestita*



These plants are true terrestrials. They require a total rest period following blooming, so you have to stop watering. If you wish, you can take them out of the pot and store the bulbs in a cool & dark place for 2-3 months.

Start checking on them in March. When there are signs of new growths forming at the base of the bulbs, pot them up in fresh mix (every year). There are two schools of thought:

- Each plant should consist of:
  - 2 bulbs (last year's growth + the one from the previous year). With room for current year growth, this requires a larger pot, but also produces more and larger new growths. 
  - A single bulb (last year's growth). This allows you to use smaller pots, but tends to limit the size (and number) of the next growth. Place any viable older bulbs in a tray to produce new plantlets, which will take a year or two to grow to BS. 

Use a terrestrial mix. Traditionally I have been using:

- 4 parts chunky peat (1/2" to 2" 'nuggets')
- 2 parts composted manure
- 1 part composted leaf mulch
- 1 part perlite

Chunky peat is no longer available in the US. Instead I am using ProMix + bark (I might add some coconut coir too). The mix should be water retentive, but still light & airy.

Water sparingly till the new growth is 2-3" tall. From that point, till the leaves start turning yellow in the fall, do not let the plants go dry. Drench, and water again when just barely moist.

Since these plants have a relatively short growing season, they do require more fertilizer than most other orchids, while in active growth. I give them some NutriCote to augment our normal fertilizer program (every 2 weeks).

Calanthes need light levels similar to Cattleya. Intermediate temperature range is fine (I grow them in a green-

house with thermostat set at 55°F).

Calanthes set 2-3 large plicate leaves on each bulb. The leaves usually turn yellow and drop off prior to blooming. When the leaves start to turn yellow in the fall, scale back watering a little, but do not let the pots go dry. Once leaves are mostly yellow, you can trim them back.

On occasion plants will have a portion of the leaves still in good condition by the time the plant blooms. In such cases, just trim off the yellow portion, and let the leaf do its thing to support the flowering

Flower spikes form at the base of the bulb, with blooms expected in Dec-Feb.

### *Calanthe rosea*

This species, with a very appropriate name, is easily recognized on the pinched 'waist' half way up the bulb.



There are a number of hybrids produced more recently than 1856, both at the E. Young Orchid Foundation and at the now defunct Orchid Zone. Here **Calanthe Grouville** (from the EYOF):

