

Orchids for Kusamono



General cultivation tips:

Miniature orchids generally need bright indirect light. Most do quite well in under lights set ups. 18 hour day length under 40 watt T-12 or T8 fluorescent shop lights is usually fine. Direct sun is to be avoided unless noted. Air movement, I keep fans in my growing area to keep air moving. Moving air allows more light without burning leaves.

Water - Lake Michigan municipal water is fine for majority of miniatures. Miniatures normally like moisture, like to be watered before they are completely dry. Potting media, long fiber sphagnum moss works well, ideal for very small or unusual shaped pots. Fir bark, orchid bark, if you can find a seedling grade, 1/8th to 1/4 inch particles will work well. Perlite & bark mix is good. Kanuma, Akadama & Pumice are only used for certain terrestrial orchids, most terrestrial orchids prefer either bark or long fiber sphagnum.

Fertilizer - dilute, orchids are efficient feeders, do not fertilize at full label strength, always use less than half the label concentrations, for the math adept, 40 ppm as Nitrogen is the max fertilizer concentration I would use. For orchids that grow all year, fertilize once every week or two year round.

Humidity – this is probably the key to success through winter, a minimum of 40% is needed for the immediate vicinity of the orchid. Some are much more sensitive to low humidity. Genus Lepanthes, some Pleurothallis, and Masdevallia will develop wrinkled accordion pleated foliage if humidity is too low. 60% to 80% relative humidity is ideal.

Temperatures – most are fine with normal household temperatures. Cloud forest miniatures prefer cooler temperatures, around 50 to 60 at night, 65 to 75 during the day. Some warm growers prefer 65 to 70 F at night and 80 for daytime. Majority of miniatures are not temperature sensitive.

Species or Genus of species suggestions – There are 35,000 or more species of orchids, many are small to miniature, many have either attractive flowers or attractive leaves or both, that would make them suitable for Kusamono.

Oerstedella centradenia – now called *Epidendrum centropetalum* - miniature. Cattleya Alliance. Appreciates cooler temperatures and indirect light. Throws frequent pups, plantlets, can be kept small that way.

Laelia lundii – prefers some sun and to get a little dry between watering. Cattleya Alliance.

Neolauchea pulchella – lovely small flowers, small growths, makes a nice specimen in short amount of time.

Masdevallia – thousands of species in this genus, most have leaves less than 4 inches tall. Triangular flowers, from tiny 1/8th inch flowers to big 3 inch “Kites”. Most commonly available species are temperature tolerant, and like bright shade. A few gorgeous species are extreme cool growing high altitude plants. Best easy to grow lowland species is *Masdevallia infracta*.

Pleurothallis – genus with thousands of species – most are miniatures, many weird oddly shaped flowers. Most are warmer growing. The genus is actually an Alliance of related genera. The genus *Stelis*, and *Restrepia* appear in the program, and are part of

this group.

Dendrobium – a large genus of orchids, ranging from micro-miniatures to giant species. *Dend. kingianum*, and *D. monoliforme* are dwarfs, in Japan are frequently potted to a rock and set in a otherwise empty bonsai pot. Pinks flowers for *kingianum*, and white fragrant flowers for *monoliforme*. Foliage of *monoliforme* may be variegated. *Den cuthbertsonii* is a famous, gorgeous miniature, with flowers that last 6 months at a time, but is fiendishly difficult to keep alive more than a year or two.

Jewel leaf orchids – these are grown for leaf colors and textures, flowers are not the focal point.

Ludisia discolor, (formerly *Haemaria discolor*) very easy to grow, sometimes seen growing in “African Violet Soil”, does best in sphagnum. Brown & red leaves, with glistening silver veins.

Nephelaphyllum species and *Anoectochilus* species – a group of 50 or so species all similar, but different from *Ludisia*, many of these are miniatures, slightly more difficult to grow, needs humidity. Gorgeous but very susceptible to slugs and snails.

Paphiopedilum – the “Slipper Orchids”, usually grown for their pouched shaped flowers, which are too large and showy for accompanying a tree, but when not in bloom, many have lovely leaves. Especially the *Parvisepalum* group of *Paphs*. *Paph armeniacum*, *delnatii*, *micranthum* & *vietnamense* all have nicely tessellated leaves and are of small size. *Paphs* in the *Maudiae* group of hybrids often have pleasant tessellated foliage. Most grow these in bark, though some grow them in sphagnum. Relatively easy, slow growing and pretty widely available. Usually only bloom once every 2 to 5 years.

Oeceoclades – a dozen species, rarely available, these are cryptic leaved desert floor orchids. Grow in the shade of Baobab trees. Hard bronze leaves with intricate patterns. Easy to grow, prefer to dry out between watering during cool winter weather, pot in bark based mix. *O. roseovariegata* slide in program.

Neofinetia (now called *Vanda*) *falcata* – this is the Japanese Wind Orchid – Much appreciated in Japan – grown more for its sword shaped foliage, often displayed as a mounded clump in a specially designed pot that looks like an ornate cascade pot. Needs some sun or brighter light, likes cool to cold winter, hot humid summers.

There are thousands more species and hybrids, too many to list. Just browse through sales areas at orchid shows.

Best reference for identifying orchid species, and to get at least an idea of where they come from, hence a clue how to grow them, see the Internet Orchid Species Photo Encyclopedia.

<http://www.orchidspecies.com/>

Resources

Kusamono Gardens – source for Asian terrestrial orchids, ideal for traditional Kusamono

<https://www.kusamonogardens.com/shop/egret-orchid>

Leo Schordje - website, sales pages are currently obsolete, but the reference pages for Kusamono are still relevant. Links to fertilizer references available on main page.

<http://www.schordje.com/leosorchids/myweb9/kusamono.htm>

Crataegus – Blog of Michael Hagedorn. He has an article on Habenaria

<https://crataegus.com/2011/09/12/habenaria-radiata-white-egret-flower/>

Bonsai Tonight – Jonas Dupuich – search his website for accent plants, several pages on Habenaria orchids.

<https://bonsaitonight.com/2017/04/14/effect-soil-mix-bulb-production-habaneria-radiata/>

<https://bonsaitonight.com/2016/09/02/growing-medium-terrestrial-orchids/>

<https://bonsaitonight.com/2016/04/29/growing-terrestrial-orchids/>

<https://bonsaitonight.com/tag/accents/>

Sources

Kusamono Gardens – mail order only, Order between beginning of December thru March for spring delivery - <https://www.kusamonogardens.com/>

Orchids by Hausermann – 3.5 acres of greenhouses, all orchids. From the very small to the very tall, all for sale at Hausermann's. Elmhurst, IL west of Chicago, just west of the junction of Highway 83 and Highway 64. Mail order, but visit in person if you can, at least once. 58th anniversary sale Feb 28 – March 1 and March 6 thru March 8.

<https://www.orchidsbyhausermann.com/>

Natt's Orchids – in Naperville, Illinois, not far from Hidden Gardens – source of many, beautifully grown miniature orchids. Another must see destination. Natt's brings their

orchids to shows all across the area. Madison Orchid Show on Superbowl weekend in February, Milwaukee Orchid Show in September, worth the trip to visit in person. Owners Prayool and Anchalee are delightful to visit with. They will also mail order.

<https://www.nattsorchids.com/>

Wisconsin Orchid Society. WOS – plant sales at every monthly meeting. Meetings usually first Sunday of the month at Mt. Carmel Lutheran Church, 8424 West Center Street, Milwaukee 53222-4798.

<https://www.wisconsinorchidsociety.com/index.php>

Resources within the Wisc. Orchid Society include Sunprarie Orchids, also known as Bil Nelson, Bil Stocks the orchids for sale at the Mitchell Domes. Member Walter Crawford is the club's specialist in miniature species, hit him up at a meeting.

J & L Orchids, Easton, CT – excellent selection of miniature orchids, mail order, or visit their sales table at the WOS show in September at Mitchell Domes.

<https://jlorchids.com/>

Mountain Orchids – Vermont – mail order only, Darrin Norton, proprietor. Many hard to locate cloud forest orchids, and miniature orchids from all over the world. Lately they have been stocking a number of miniature begonias, rare gesneriads and ferns.

<https://www.mountainorchids.com/>