

ORCHIDS AS IDEAL LANDSCAPE MATERIAL

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Abstract

Orchids are one of the most fascinating, beautiful and peculiar family among the flowering plants. They are a unique group of plants offering a broad array of possibilities to gardeners and landscapers. Orchids have always been an ideal landscape material for various reasons which include floral hue, form and adaptation. In any garden design, the aesthetic value of garden is of a paramount concern and orchids have proven themselves to fulfil it to the core. Orchids are resilient under various conditions and can make a spectacular and rewarding addition to a landscape. Long lasting and bewitchingly beautiful flowers uplift them to be an outstanding choice for gardeners. Orchids respond positively when grown in pots or hanging wooden baskets or mounted to trees, walls or rocks.

Introduction

ORCHIDS ARE an ideal landscape material for various reasons, as one of the largest families under angiosperms, offer a range of floral colour, plant morphology and habit adaptation to cater any landscape requirement. Orchid plants generally look their best when in bloom. The color and texture of a wide array of landscape plant material can be deployed to augment the beauty of the orchids or to add beauty to the garden. They are essential for developing a landscape theme, and for creating ambience and physical comport in a garden. A wide variety of shape and form of orchid flowers has captured the interest of horticulturists, growers, landscape professionals, traders, and home gardeners (Tremblay, 2011).

Permanent Orchid Planting

These are either in mass bedding or solitary on trees, rocks or manmade structures. Bedding material may be a mixture of broken bricks, charcoal granite chips and mix of leaf mould, sand and loam. Pumice rock is an excellent substrate for growing lithophytic orchids, while branches and tree stumps are good for epiphytic orchids. More permanent perches can be obtained by selecting good living hosts such as *Plumeria* trees. Manmade structures such as concrete or metallic structures surfaced with natural fibres will also provide long term perches.

Orchids in Meadows

Wildflower meadows are special places for plant lovers and a natural habitat for many orchids. A meadow makes a great setting for orchids. Orchids give a

finishing touch to any meadow. The following orchids can be grown in specified meadow sites.

Chalk/Alkaline/Dry

Anacamptis pyramidalis (Pyramid), *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Fragrant), *Himantoglossum hircinum* (Lizard), *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid), *O. Fuciflora*, *O. insectifera* (Fly), *O. sphegodes* (Early Spider), (Late Spider), *Orchis mascula* (Early Purple), *O. militaris* (Military).

Alkaline/Neutral/Damp

Anacamptis morio (Green Winged), *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted), *D. incarnata* (Early Marsh), *D. praetermissa* (Southern Marsh),.

Neutral/Acidic/Damp

Dactylorhiza maculata (Heath Spotted), *D. purpurella* (Northern Marsh), *Platanthera bifolia* (Lesser Butterfly), *P. chlorantha* (Greater Butterfly).

Orchids for Dry and Gravel Gardens

Most of the orchid species suitable for these gardens are tuberous, and many are ideal for alkaline soils. The conditions provided for these plants should be well drained, usually as light as possible, with a gritty, open and lime rich soil. Species for these conditions include the small growing, but pretty *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and *Gymnadenia conopsea* with mild pink flowers; Tuberous terrestrials, such as *Barlia robertiana* and the large growing lizard orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum* and green winged orchid *Orchis morio*.

Orchids for Beds and Borders

A number of robust orchids can be grown in beds and borders with modified soil conditions to suit their requirements. For example, species may be given discreet pockets of compost in a rock garden or raised beds or in troughs, sinks and other large containers that remain outdoor all year round. Warm sunny borders immediately next to a house or greenhouse wall afford protection for tender species and for species that require bright dry situations. Alkaline soils can provide good conditions for a number of orchid species. When growing in an open ground, effective drainage must be provided. The two most promising group of orchid species for beds and borders are Epidendrums and vandas in backyards, front gardens, hedges, foundation plantings and semi-formal gardens. Lush, robust plants of the evergreen Dendrobiums are planted in porous beds of gravel or cinders to edge driveways, to cover garage foundations and as borders for ways. *Spathoglottis* form large ground beds and Vandas are planted a backdrop for smaller flowering plants.

Orchids in Tree Gardens

Tree culture of orchids is more widely practiced in the gardens. Both species and hybrids of *Brassia*, *Cattleya*, *Dendrobium*, *Epidendrum*, *Laelia*, *Phalaenopsis*, *Vanda* and innumerable other genera can be grown with rewarding success. Growing orchids on trees can be done in two different ways. The simplest is a mere modification of nature's own way of growing. Orchid plants can be wired directly to the branches, trunk and crotches of trees or palms with rough bark under moderate shade. The second method of growing orchids on trees more closely resembles greenhouse methods of growing, but is almost as simple as the above. Wooden rafts or baskets in which the orchids are planted in osmunda, coconut husk, tree fern or other medium are suspended by wires from the horizontal branches of low or medium-sized trees.

Orchids in Hanging Baskets

Orchids look beautiful and perform well in hanging baskets. Many varieties of orchids are easy to growing in hanging baskets. Their blooms are very long-lasting and they grow well indoor and also on a covered porch or under a shady tree. Epiphytic orchids grow most successfully in containers that allow air circulation to their roots, which means perforated hanging baskets lined with sphagnum moss or coconut fibre are very much ideal. Terrestrial orchids can also be grown successfully

in hanging baskets. All orchids look great in baskets especially when they are planted in mass and also when planted along the sides of the basket.

Orchids for Naturalizing

Naturalizing means the ability of a species to successfully establish beyond cultivation, reproduce and spread without direct human assistance. Given a little assistance, orchids can be encouraged to naturalize in gardens. Self perpetuating populations of genera including *Orchis* and *Dactylorhiza* are most suitable. The key success is to reduce competition to a manageable degree, for which there are two rules. The first is to actively discourage rank growing plants, thus leaving mix of vegetation in which orchids will do well. The height at which the vegetation is set and mix of species present must suit the one wish to establish. As a rule, vegetation dominated by grasses seems to suit most orchids. Taller grasses are suited for the larger growing *Dactylorhizas* and short grasses for genera and species of down land habitats such as *Ophrys* and *Spiranthes*. The best choice for this treatment would be those species that occur locally in grassland, hedge banks, road verges and other such habitats. If a small population exists within a garden the management of the area can be modified to encourage them to spread and colonize.

Orchids for Potted Plants

Orchids have appealing potted plant characteristics including large, fragrant and showy pansy like flowers in a wide range of colors. Flowering potted orchids have become one of the largest shares in the global floriculture trade. Epidendrums, vandas, vanillas, phaius and many other orchid genera can be grown in tubs or pots which may be utilized to landscape a garden. When artistically arranged around a patio or courtyard they can provide a breath-taking picture which cannot be compensated through any other form of gardening. Some of the species suitable for potted plants are *Anoectochilus brevilabris*, *Ascocentrum ampullaceum*, *Bulbophyllum putidum*, *Calanthe chloroleuc*, *C. herbacea*, *C. masuca*, *Coelogyne nitida*, *C. ochracea*, *Dendrobium chrysotoxum*, *D. densiflorum*, *D. fimbriatum*, *D. williamsonii*, *Paphiopedilum fairrieianum*, *P. hirsutissimum*, *P. insigne*, *P. spicerianum*, *P. venustum*, *P. villosum*, *Phaius flavus*, *P. tankervilleae*, *Phalaenopsis lobii*, *Pleione hookeriana*, *P. humilis*, *P. maculata*, *Renanthera imschootiana*, *Vanda coerulescens*, *V. cristata*, *Vandopsis undulata*.

Orchids for Interior Colorscapeing

Interior plantscaping is a natural and necessary part

of modern work environment, is the art of bringing the world of nature to working and living environment and thereby helping to reduce levels of stress and help increase productivity. Orchids are most suited for interiorscaping to create a peaceful, relaxing and inviting environment. Interior Colorschemes help make a vibrant impact and to improve the 'Indoor Curb Appeal'. Orchids along with Bromeliads, and a variety of seasonal or tropical flowering plants can take interior plant program to a next level and make it even more spectacular with accents of color throughout your space. Most of *Cattleya*, *Dendrobium*, *Oncidium*, *Paphiopedilum*, *Phalaenopsis*, *Vanda* are suitable for colorscaping. The fragrant orchids *Angranthus grandiflora* (Jasmine fragrance), *Brassavola nodosa* (Sweet scented), *Cattleya walkeriana* (Cinnamon and Vanilla fragrance), *Miltoniopsis santanaei* (scent of roses), *Phalaenopsis violacea* (Spicy, Cinnamon fragrance) and others have a better scope as natural room fresheners with an amazing fragrance.

Conclusion

Orchids can add exotic beauty, amazing colour, and incomparable fragrance to landscape. When bringing the orchid component into the garden design, decisions must be made as to where permanent plantings are to be placed, and where changing displays are to be staged. Blooming season of orchid should also be taken into consideration. Infrastructural components of the garden's construction must be in place to support the display. Supporting landscape plant material must be used to enhance the display of orchids. Orchids make beautiful, exotic additions to any tropical or sub-tropical garden.

References

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