

MARK PIETTE EPI GALLERIA

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CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR EPIPHYLLUMS

EPI BASICS

SUN Epis need filtered sunlight approximating sun through tree leaves that is natural for them. They cannot take direct sun or complete shade. Laths or 75% shade cloth are excellent.

SOIL The potting mixture used at the Galleria is 2 parts leaf mold, 2 parts organic compost, 2 parts perlite or pumice and 1 part dry steer manure. The manure can be left out and 10-10-10 time release plant food mixed in. You will have to determine the amount based on the total quantity of potting mixture. Leaf mold can be difficult to find and you can substitute finely ground bark or prepared coir. The substitute is not as good, but it will provide the drainage and loose acidic soil that you need. For 1 or 2 cuttings you can use a mixture of 4 parts commercial camellia/azalea potting mix, 1 part perlite or pumice and 1 part leaf mold or ground bark. Mix it well, do not pack it, just scoop it into the pot.

WATER Epis must not be kept wet, as they will rot quickly if allowed to stand in wet soil. On the other hand the roots should not be allowed to dry out completely. It is time to water when the top 1 and 1/2 inches of soil is dry.

PLANTING YOUR NEW CUTTINGS

Each cutting has been treated with growth hormone and the cut end is hardened enough to plant. Use 3-1/2 inch square pots. The cutting can stay in this pot until the amount of new growth requires additional root room. The cutting cannot use water until it has roots and before that water increases the risk of rot. You can start watering about 10 days after planting. Very dry cuttings can be misted with a spray bottle.

ROOTED CUTTINGS AND ESTABLISHED PLANTS

Each variety has it's own growing and blooming times and they will not follow the same timetable. The plant may bloom in the third year and often in the second year. Second year blooms are at the expense of the plant and the choice of pinching off the bud or allowing it to mature is yours. It often falls off anyway. Do not fertilize in the winter. After the last frost use 0-10-10 fertilizer for blooming plants and 10-10-10 for others. After blooming use 10-10-10 fertilizer. Mature plants usually need some training or support. Most plants do well in hanging baskets and that is the simplest method of support where space is available. Stakes can be used for taller plants and large tall plants are especially adaptable to a trellis. A trellis plant can be very showy.

PESTS AND PROBLEMS

Snails and slugs do a lot of damage and leave the branches looking rather shabby. Watch for freshly gnawed areas on the branches. The imported cabbage worm can devastate a plant overnight. Watch for a small white butterfly. That's mama looking for a salad to lay her eggs on. Scale insects are unsightly and can kill the plant. Apply insecticidal soap to the affected plant once a week until the scale doesn't come back. Epis are susceptible to fungus and some varieties moreso than others. Garden fungicides are often too harsh for epis, but I have had good results with one that uses sulfur as the only active ingredient. Apply it once a week until the black spots are just scars. Heavily infested branches should be removed. A yellow plant is getting too much sun. Many plants will be reddish when stressed and will usually return to a healthy green when proper conditions are restored.