

Raymond Prothero's pick

*Cypripedium formosanum*



Native to the Oiwake mountains of Taiwan. Growing between 2000 and 3000 m.

Blooming time in situ is April and May. But I flower the one I have in Sacramento March.

Habitat is Forest and open, damp places.

The beautiful terrestrial orchid is one of the easiest *Cypripediums* to grow, I grow it in a rich organic soil mix. I add new organic soil to it yearly and transplant it every other year. Plants benefit from being divided and transplanted into fresh organic mix is the key to keeping this plant healthy.

The flowers are mostly white with tones of pink and crimson spots at the base of the petals and larger spots on the lip. The two-leaved foliage about half way up the stem opposite of each other flare out like 2 Chinese fans.

How to grow it. This orchid does well outdoors in the Redwood Coast range of California. I grow mine in Sacramento and give it a little more TLC. First I grow in the greenhouse on the ground near my swamp cooler under my bench most of the warm summer months, In the fall plants do go dormant and will lose all their leaves. I keep it in the greenhouse till February then I take it out and put in a shady location in my yard, (At this point there is not visible new growth yet) Plants quickly start to grow in the spring and with a short amount of time the plants will flower before the leaves fully open. Flower stocks are frost tender and should be protected if there is a change of frost when in bud or flower. I have never had to worry about frost on my plant. But was warned about it from my friend who gave me the plant. I return it to the greenhouse shortly after its done blooming.



