

THE PLOVER ORCHID

UNPACKING

You will receive your Plover Orchid bulbs packaged in a small plastic cup with damp sphagnum moss. Upon receiving your package, open it immediately and inspect it for damage. Bulbs should be damp but not wet. There should be no rot or decay, no fungus or mold. You can leave them in this cup in your refrigerator for a short period of time.

STORAGE

The Plover Orchid should be stored in a cold damp environment. 36-42 °F is ideal. DO NOT FREEZE. Keep them moist, but not wet. For long-term storage, place bulbs in a container or freezer bag with a bit of very slightly damp sphagnum, vermiculite, or perlite. In moderate winter climates you can store them outside and in colder winter climates a garage may suffice. Ideally, the best place to store your bulbs may be the refrigerator. It is also a good idea to check them once in a while for fungal attacks. If a bulb is rotten, remove it from the group and either store it separately or dispose of it.

PLANTING

The Plover Orchid requires good oxygen for their roots. The best soil mix to accomplish this is kanuma or akadama. Here at Kusamono Gardens, we grow almost all out terrestrial orchids in 100% kanuma. Kanuma is a Japanese soil and can be very difficult to find and expensive in the U.S. It can sometimes be found at bonsai and azalea specialty nurseries. If kamuma is not an option, there are a number of substitutes that can be used. I prefer pumice mixed with milled sphagnum moss in a 50:50 ratio. It allows for greater root aeration and still holds quite a bit of water. You can also use vermiculite or perlite. Ultimately the best medium will depend your unique growing environment and watering habits. In early spring, after the last frost, the bulbs should be planted just below the surface, perhaps 0.5 inch deep. You can plant 3-5 bulbs in a 4-inch nursery pot. If you have a cold frame you can start them early, but be sure to protect the newly planted bulbs from freezing, especially if they are in a pot.

GROWING

Once potted, put them in a bright, warm location and keep them moist, but not wet. Be patient, they can take weeks to start to grow, but once they do, increase watering. When the days truly get hot and the plants are growing strong, water them such that they remain essentially wet. The water you use should be relatively low in dissolved minerals. In the hottest and driest of climates, you should protect them from the afternoon sun. Because the recommended soil mix does not have any organic material, you should fertilize your orchid. Almost any fertilizer will work well, but I recommend applying cottonseed meal and half strength fish emulsion every couple of weeks.