

Cattleya Flower Sheaths

Cattleyas have three types of flower sheaths and all need to be treated differently.

Healthy Green Sheaths

When these sheaths come up they are the same colour as the leaves and one does not have to do anything to help. The bud will form shortly after and as it grows the sheath will split and flower normally.

Dry Sheaths

Some sheaths appear normal but are paper thin and never develop flower buds. After a couple of months the sheath dries up. If the plant is young there is nothing wrong and the next cycle sheath will come up normally and flower. If the plant is older and has flowered before then there is a problem. The plant is stressed. When an Orchid plant is stressed it withholds nutrients from the sheath and lets it die. This is the time to re-pot and look at the roots. If the roots are healthy then you should look at the temperature and light. The night time temperature should be between 60° F and 70° F and the day time temperature should be between 70° F and 80° F. Cattleya orchids like bright light but not direct sunlight. The easiest way to tell if the plant is getting the correct amount of light is to look at the leaves. If they are dark green the plant is not getting enough light and if the leaves are near yellow in colour, the plant is getting too much. After you fix what ever is stressing your plant it should produce flowers on the next cycle.



Wet Sheaths

This type you need to worry about. Some species produce these sheaths every time they flower. As soon as the sheath gets honeydew on it and starts to turn black the sheath must be opened. The best way is to use a one-sided razor blade as the photo below shows. If you do not mind how the sheath looks you can always just use a pair of scissors and cut it off diagonally. Once the sheath is open the bud inside should not rot.

