

Honohono Orchid Culture

By Jan Takamiya

Dendrobium anosmum – previously known as *superbum*

Related species: *Den. Parishii*, *Den aphyllum*, *Den loddigesii*, *Den primulinum* (polyanthum) etc

Temperature and Humidity - Honohono prefer warm temperatures, with a day to night difference of about 10-20 degrees. Cold winter spells appear to boost flower production. Sunny/cloudy conditions, elevation, surrounding plants, ground cover, air flow & water may impact humidity and temperature.

Light – Light quality changes throughout the year. Honohono grow best with bright (filtered) sunlight and a long day length. The bloom will probably be sparse if grown in shady or inadequately lighted areas. Avoid direct unfiltered mid-day sun. Consider 65% shade for keiki & 50% shade for mature plants. If you are growing your Honohono under the eaves of your house, a lanai or under a tree, your orchids will probably do best if they are on the east, south or west facing sides. Be aware of trees, brush, buildings, roof lines or surroundings that may impact light.

Air Movement – Honohono do best when they have good air circulation. This is an often overlooked factor in growing orchids. Good air circulation helps to reduce heat stress by cooling the surface of the leaf and prevent leaf burn. It helps to speed up evaporation of surface moisture after watering, and this helps prevent fungal disease. You can improve air circulation by not over-crowding your plants and by keeping your plants elevated.

Water – Honohono respond well to heavy watering and may be watered daily during the growing season (March-Nov). Watering is reduced to 2-3 times a week during the period of dormancy (Dec-Feb). Wet the entire plant, soak roots. They grow best when they are allowed to dry out between watering. Old media or media that retains too much salts/moisture can be problematic; repot after 2-3 years.

Typical media is a mixture of: New Zealand pine bark, perlite & peat or sphagnum.

Fertilizing – Good nutrition is essential to producing long canes and a profuse bloom. Honohono are heavy feeders and respond well to fertilization. Fertilize weekly and increase to twice weekly once the keiki are established and during the active growing season (May-November). I use a high phosphorous* fertilizer in November and again when buds emerge. Fertilizing is typically reduced or stopped when watering is reduced, and when temperatures are colder. (Dec-Feb)

Water soluble fertilizers:

- Michigan State Formulation 13-3-15 RO
- Peters 15-5-15 or 20-20-20
- 10-30-10 or bloom booster

*high middle number

Granular fertilizers (Check duration to end fertilization by Dec):

- Nutricote 13-13-13 (granular, slow release)
- Island supreme Orchid & Anthurium 8-8-8

Additional amendments (mostly for micronutrients)

- Calcium-dolomite or bone meal
- Plant Growth Enhancer – organic tea
- HB 101
- EM-1 – microbial inoculant
- Microplex – powder form

Caution: Fertilizers are salts. Salt build up may retard growth, especially with pot keiki production, so repot every 2-3 years.

Dormancy – In nature, dormancy is a time of suspended or slowed growth. Honohono go through a period of dormancy just prior to blooming. This period usually runs from December-February, which is Asia's summer (Hawaii's winter). During this period, the canes harden or stiffen; sheaths form on canes, the leaves yellow and fall off and the process of bud production and blooming begins. Stop fertilizing & reduce watering to 2-3x a week. I believe that flower production is enhanced with a period of dormancy. I end dormancy when buds appear; resume weekly fertilizing & water daily to support pot keiki growth.

Plant Health – The best treatment for insect and disease problems is prevention. Keep your plant healthy! Treat for slugs and snails regularly. Remove old, dead vegetation & weeds from the growing area. Keep everything as clean as possible. Work on newspaper and discard it after every repotting. Wash your hands regularly or wear disposable gloves.

Viruses are spread primarily by using a contaminated cutting tool. Sterilize cutting tools with a hot flame or torch before use on a plant.

Root/fungal diseases may occur from too much water and lack of a drying period. Be sure pots drain well. Flower thrips are a concern during the blooming season. Bulbils snip buds & may shred leaves. Doves are attracted to slug bait & bring seed/weeds into the growing area.

Treat cut canes with a disinfectant such as ground cinnamon, rubbing alcohol, etc.

If you must spray, start by using:

- Horticultural oil
- Rubbing alcohol or Simple Green
- Bayer's 3 in 1 (fungicide, insecticide, miticide) Always follow the label.
I spray before dormancy and again when buds emerge