

Masdevallias will grow easily given a temperature range between approx. 5c. –25c. Temperatures a little outside this range for short periods of time can be tolerated reasonably well.

HOUSING.

Our masdevallia house is a simple construction of treated timber posts and 50% white shade cloth. The roof has a clear fiberglass roof over the shade cloth.

Because our home is located on a NNeasterly sloping block close to the coast we do not experience extreme weather conditions and our masdevallia growing area does not need to be very enclosed apart from the shade cloth. This allows plenty of air flow right thru the growing area, an essential condition for ideal culture. The location of the house right at the highest part of the block also allows good light levels all day.

People living in frost prone areas with the possibility of lower temperatures will need to find a balance between air flow and protection for the plants from extreme cold.

The benches in our masdevallia area are made from wire mesh and are about 1 metre off the ground with the areas under the benches containing plenty of foliage plants for humidity.

POTTING MIX.

The mix we use for our masdevallias consists of the following:
2 parts 10-15mm bark (one of the commercially prepared ones)
2 parts myrtle leaf mulch.(no soil in it.)
1 part small washed gravel.

(The above portions are measured in a 9 litre plastic bucket)

To the above add, 1 small handful of Blood & Bone

1 small handful of complete fertilizer. (we use a 5-6-9 granular type)

We use an old hand power cement mixer to do the mixing and then transfer the completed mix to a container lined with a garbag, sealing the top and storing for 8 weeks before use.

We know of quite a few people who have tried this mix. Some have not had any success with it. Others have done well with it. We recommend trying it with only a few plants at first.

POTS. We use Dome pots for almost all our masdevallias This style of pot seems to suit the plants.

POTTING Firstly about 2-3 mm of small washed gravel in the bottom of the pot then some of the above mix, position the plant centrally and fill in around. When complete the crown of the plant should be at the top or slightly higher than the top of the pot level with the mix to the top of the pot. At this point we cover around the top of the pot with

Sphagnum moss or bush moss and tuck it in around the edges of the pot. Remember, masdevallias like most orchids prefer to be quite snug in the pot so don't use a pot too big for the plant!!

WATERING is a simple procedure, when the moss on the pots is almost dry its time to water.

FERTILISING is done fortnightly all year round with one third strength Campbells yellow orchid food, with the addition of a pinch of chelated iron and one third a tspn. Of Epsom salts per 5 ltr batch. The Campbells, chelated iron and Epsom salts to be dissolved in hot water before making up to 5 ltrs with cold water.

ALTERNATIVE MIXES AND FERTILISERS.

Other types of potting medium can be used for masdevallias. The most popular and easy to use is sphagnum moss, and as long as the moss is of good quality the plants will grow very easily. The fertilizer described above will not kill the moss and providing the shade house environment is reasonably good the moss should thrive.

We have seen many collections grown in just small bark and pebbles and whilst this is ok attention needs to be paid to the moisture content of the pots as this mix tends to dry out and plants stress from lack of water.

Many masdevallias can also be grown quite well on cork mounts. They will of course need more watering in the warmer weather. Generally the small fine rooted species and their hybrids are most suited to mounting. Once mounted a light covering of bush moss on the roots can be beneficial.

There are quite a few other types of fertilizers that are good for masdevallias. For example, Manutec , Aquasol, Phostrogen. The main thing to remember is only use these at about 1/3 rd strength.

PESTS AND DISEASES.

We have found that a healthy strong growing collection of masdevallias does not attract too many pests, so if your environment and general culture is good then problems tend to be minimal.

Aphids and green scale have been occasional problems for us but not to the extent where we found spraying was needed, rather cleaning by hand. Regular, close observation of the plants usually detects these pests at an early stage.

AS with any orchid collection care must be taken to avoid the spread of virus. Masdevallias are prone to all the commonly know virus types and also can be infected by one called Bean Yellow Mosaic Virus. Most virus displays in the new leaves as they develop as uneven yellowish patching. **THERE IS NO CURE FOR VIRUS!!** If a plant is suspect there are two options for the grower, 1-disposal of the plant, 2- isolate the plant and send a sample leaf for virus testing. This can be worthwhile if the plant is

quite valuable or rare. (virus testing currently costs \$16.50 per plant) Adverts in Orchids Australia will tell you where to send your samples.

Your best insurance against virus is to be scrupulously clean at your potting bench, making sure that all cutting implements are sterilised after each plant is done. This is best achieved by heating blades in a flame till they glow. Hands can also transfer plant sap, disposable rubber gloves fixes this one easily. The bench top can be kept clean for each plant simply by laying out old newspapers to do your plants on and disposing of the top sheet after each plant. When buying new plants it is ideal if they can be kept away from your general collection until the show their next lot of new leaf to be clean.

GROWING SPECIES MASDEVALLIAS.

For those who like to grow the species masdevallias You will need to know the temperature requirements for each one. Many, like *m.coccinea*, *m.ignea*, and *m. welischii* are cold growers and fit well into our climate, but there are also many which require some warmth to do their best. A very good reference for this information is *A MASDEVALLIA CULTURAL GUIDE* by William Ames Rhodehamel. This book covers all aspects of growing including temperature requirements for all species, natural habitat, ease of cultivation and rarity. The best chance of finding this book if your orchid club doesn't have a copy is to contact book sellers Florilegium or Orchidaceous Books.

Also a slightly more recent book *Masdevallias, Gems of the Orchid World* by Mary Gerritsen & Ron Parsons is a must read !! Great info. and Rons photography is fantastic.

Also the internet is a great source of information both written and photos. Just "Google" Masdevallias and see a whole world of orchids unfold!! Its quite amazing.
www.pleurothallids.com. just one of many to try.