



OAK HILL GARDENS

A recent trip to visit Hawaiian orchid nurseries in March 2012 exposed me to a new type of orchid bark called Orchiata, (pronounced or-key-ah-ta.)

This is a sustainable orchid growing substrate produced from 100% pure New Zealand Pinus radiata bark and sourced from renewable man-made forests. After learning about its attributes, I was anxious to get back home and give it a try.

One month after re-potting a group of Phalaenopsis schilleriana that were pretty much left for dead, I was amazed to see new roots shooting out the bottom of the pots and see the leaves perking up with health and vigor! I've used a lot of different potting mediums in my 35 years of growing but I have never seen results like this. I was very intrigued!

Orchiata bark is widely used as a stand-alone product, meaning there is no need to add other components such as peat, vermiculite, perlite or charcoal. Just open the bag and start potting. Talk about simple! The Orchiata bark comes in four very uniform grades: Classic (1/4-3/8") Power (3/8-1/2") Power + (1/2-3/4") and Super (3/4-1".) I've used the Classic for small seedlings in 2.5 to 3 inch pots, the Power for slightly larger pots of 4 to 5 inches, the Power + for more mature plants in pots up to 7-8 inches, and the Super for Vandaceous types and larger specimen pots. Your specific use of each bark size may vary depending on your individual growing techniques and environment.

Orchiata bark has many other attributes including there is no need for pre-soaking or washing, it has a stable pH of 5.5-6.5, it has beneficial micro organisms to combat pathogens, and is very consistent in rewetting and drying. This product also is proven to maintain longevity in a pot for over 8 years, which means you can "over-pot" your orchid thus having less frequent repotting cycles. Although Orchiata bark costs a little more than our native douglas fir bark, the benefits may outweigh the added expense.

It is important that the root system of your orchids remain healthy and active in order for your plants to perform to their absolute best. When checking your collection this season, see if there is a plant or two that may be looking for an extra boost.

Go ahead and try a new potting medium, or modify your existing medium to better accommodate your individual plant's needs. Your orchids will respond with added health and vigor when the roots are doing their best.

Happy Growing Everyone!

**Chuck Acker,
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