

Tolumnia Orchids and Related genera

These charming miniature Dancing Lady orchids are native to the Caribbean and surrounding areas, including the Bahamas, Cuba, Florida, and Puerto Rico. Formerly known as 'Equitant' Oncidiums this easy growing group loves warm bright weather. Bloom colors range from bright cheerful reds, oranges and yellows to delicate pastel pinks, cream and lavenders. Most carry darker markings or spots in interesting patterns. Most will flower in the later winter and early spring, though some varieties can bloom freely year round with the right care.

Light and Temperature: Grow these in bright light, with good air movement. The brighter the light the more air must be supplied to avoid burning. Generally 2000-3000 foot candles is sufficient. Some blushing or freckles on the foliage is normal in bright light conditions but if your foliage is a deep red-purple move in to less light.

Potting and Growing Media: Tolumnias are truly epiphytes and must be grown in a fast draining media to avoid rotting the tiny roots. There is no one mix that works best but we have found two different ways that have good results. The first is a sphagnum moss media mixed with Spengerock, tree fern and charcoal. This keeps the mix very open while retaining some moisture. Even though this mix can hold water for long periods of time these should not be kept with 'wet feet'. Wait until the media dries completely and then drench thoroughly. The other is a loose mixture of chunks of tree ferns and charcoal. This media will need watering much more often than the first but you are not as likely to have stale media from overwatering. You can also grow Tolumnias mounted on pieces of cork, tree fern slabs or other substrate.

Watering and Fertilizing: As stated above, allow the roots to dry before watering again. Depending on your conditions this could be every 2-3 days or once a week. Watch new purchases closely for the first week or so to gauge what your schedule might be. Generally, we fertilize ours every third or fourth watering with a balanced food such as Grow-More 20-10-20. The more often you water the more often you can fertilize. During the warm growing months fertilizer can be applied as often as once per week. Increasing the humidity around your plant will mean watering less often and also increase the life of your blooms.