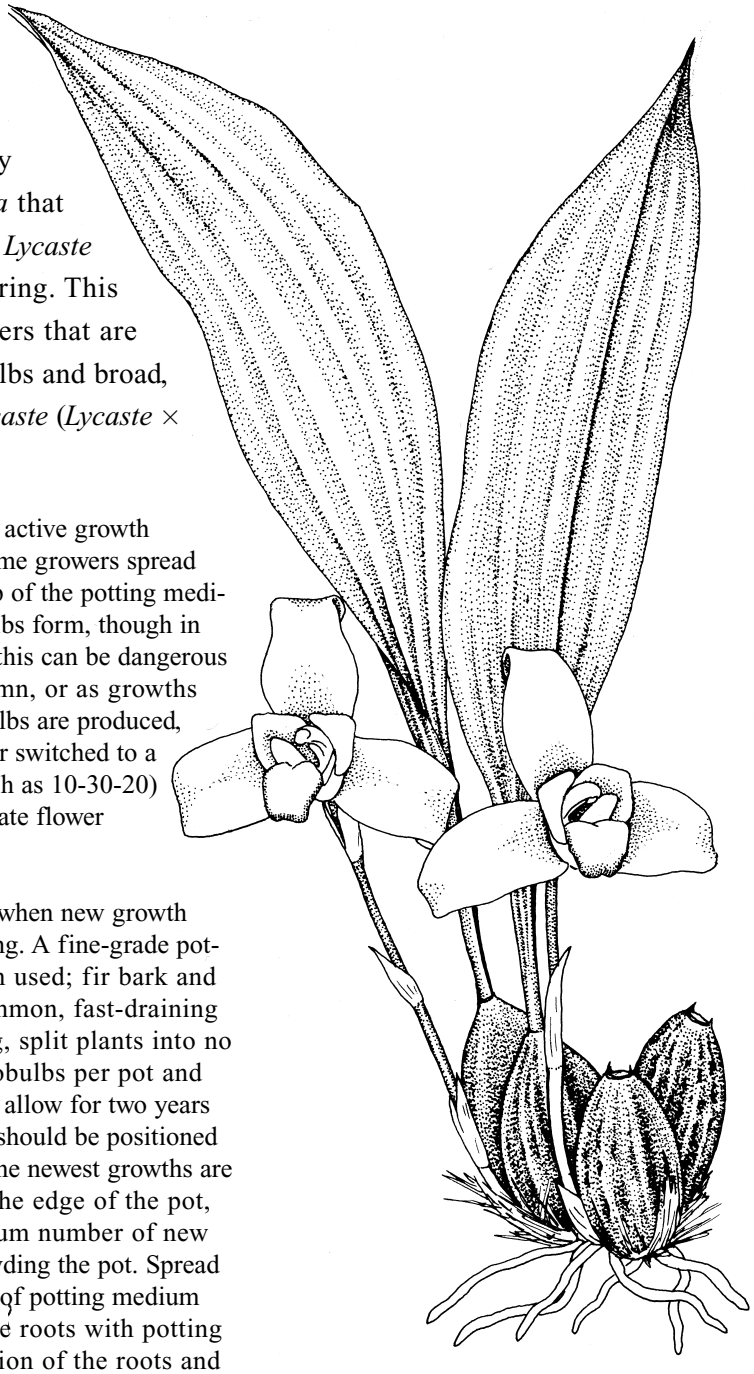
Lycaste

lye-KASS-tee



Lycastes are deciduous in various degrees, from the strongly deciduous, yellow-flowered species like *Lycaste aromatica* that flowers from leafless pseudobulbs to the evergreen types like *Lycaste skinneri* with pseudobulbs that retain their leaves at flowering. This genus produces large, long-lasting, showy, triangular flowers that are waxy. The plants are distinctive for their roundish pseudobulbs and broad, plicate (pleated) leaves. Culture for the hybrid genus *Angulocaste* (*Lycaste* × *Anguloa*) follows the culture for the *Lycaste* parent.

LIGHT requirements vary. Deciduous species require light conditions as for cattleyas — 2,000 to 4,000 foot-candles or 50 to 70 percent shade. More light is usually provided as new growths form pseudoulbs. Evergreen species grow best with less light — 1,500 to 2,000 foot-candles or 60 to 80 percent shade.

TEMPERATURES for the evergreen species should be fairly constant and never hot. Nights of 60 F and days of 75 to 80 F are desirable. The deciduous species of lycaste can tolerate a wider range, up to 95 F during the day and down to 50 F at night when dormant in the winter.

WATER should be applied freely during active growth (usually summer). The potting medium should begin to dry out between waterings. Deciduous species should be kept almost completely dry when leafless; evergreen species should be kept only slightly drier than normal after pseudobulbs form. Water should be kept off the leaves, and especially out of the new growths, to prevent rot or leaf spotting, which disfigure otherwise handsome plants.

HUMIDITY should be maintained at 40 to 70 percent. Deciduous species need less humidity when dormant. Brisk air circulation will help prevent damage to leaves by leafspot fungi.

FERTILIZE regularly and heavily when plants are actively growing. A higher-nitrogen formulation (such as 30-10-10) is recommended during active growth (usually summer); some growers spread blood meal on the top of the potting medium as new pseudobulbs form, though in inexperienced hands this can be dangerous to the plant. In autumn, or as growths mature and pseudobulbs are produced, fertilizer is reduced or switched to a high-phosphorus (such as 10-30-20) formulation to stimulate flower production.

POTTING is best when new growth starts, usually in spring. A fine-grade potting medium is often used; fir bark and perlite (3:1) is a common, fast-draining mix. When repotting, split plants into no less than two pseudobulbs per pot and choose a container to allow for two years of growth. The plant should be positioned in the vessel so that the newest growths are farthest away from the edge of the pot, allowing the maximum number of new growths without crowding the pot. Spread the roots over a cone of potting medium and fill in around the roots with potting medium to the junction of the roots and the pseudobulbs. Push the medium firmly around the roots. Keep humidity high and the potting medium on the dry side until new roots form.

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