



THE MILLION ORCHID PROJECT

With the help of students and local community, Fairchild has been generating large quantities of native orchids with the goal to re-establish them within South Florida landscapes.



Cyrtopodium punctatum (Florida Cowhorn)

Cyrtopodium punctatum (Cigar Orchid, and Cowhorn Orchid) is one of the most dramatic orchid's native to Florida. Before extreme poaching, populations were once common in hardwood hammocks and open swamps. A mass of pseudobulbs can grow up to 1.5 meters across and an individual inflorescence can produce more than 500 flowers. Flowers March-May.

Where to plant? These orchids prefer tropical hardwood trees, avoid smooth flaky bark species. Select forks in branches, crotches, or horizontal limbs that have some shade from the afternoon sun. If possible choose branches that have plenty of head space above them since this plant can reach massive sizes. You can also plant directly on the trunks of trees and palm and preferably on the north or east face to avoid direct afternoon sun. If you wish, you may leave the plant outdoors in a pot permanently. Plants can also be grown in the old frons of palm trees.

How to plant? Attach seedlings individually using cotton string or burlap twine. Do not apply any of the sphagnum moss provided in the tray, doing so will hinder root attachment and cause the roots to stay too wet promoting root rot. Make sure the plants are tightly secured to the branch and any new root leads are in contact with the bark surface; take special care not to injure the new roots. Cover roots with a woody fibrous media such as coconut husk (see photo example).

Other products such as plastic ties and monofilament can be used but these products are slow to deteriorate and are not biodegradable.



When to water? Native orchids require little to no long term care once they become established on the tree. However watering is necessary during root attachment phase. For the first month daily watering is required. Using hose or misters thoroughly soak the orchid roots and surrounding bark. For best results allow roots to dry for 10-15 minutes and reapply water. Plants that are in a pots will need to be watered when the media becomes completely dried.

Should I fertilize? Native orchids require no fertilizer once they become established on a tree. Standard garden fertilizer can be applied monthly to promote growth. We suggest ½ strength (20-20-20) fertilizer or a commercial orchid fertilizer.

To learn more about other ways to participate in The Million Orchid Project, Contact: Dr. Jason Downing; jdowning@fairchildgarden.org or 305.667.1651, ext. 3354.