

Care and Planting of Dactylorhiza Orchids

Dactylorhiza is a great genus of garden orchids, with several species occurring in Europe and even extending into East and West coastal North America. Curiously, Dact's are not common garden plants in the United States. Unlike most terrestrial orchids, Dact's will set seed directly in the garden without the need to flask seed in sterile medium. They also expand rapidly and can add several new growing stems each year if they are happy.



When you receive your Dact rhizomes, you will see fleshy storage tissue with a few roots extending downward, and the growth bud for the next season extending upward. Carefully plant these rhizomes so that the roots extend downward into the medium and with the growth bud about an inch below the surface.

Growth medium varies. At Gardens at Post Hill, where we have to access the plants often we grow them in a mixture of about 1/3 Soil Perfector, 1/3 Turface, and 1/3 pine bark mulch. They can also be grown in a very loose garden soil. When we add them to a garden we amend the soil with fine "all purpose" sand from the big box store to about 50% by volume. Make sure that you adequately water your Dact's, especially during their first couple of seasons with you. Once they have established themselves, treat them like you would hosta's, epimediums and similar plants and they will expand well.

Plant your Dact's in a shaded woodland garden where they receive 2-3 hours of sunlight each day. At more northern latitudes, they can be planted in full sun. In their natural habitats in Europe, Dact's usually appear in nearly full sunlight to full sun.

We fertilize our Dact's in the Spring with a handful of slow-release fertilizer with trace elements such as Osmocote. We make sure to get the kind with trace elements since we grow in a largely inorganic medium.



To get a great view of Dact's in a garden setting, visit Ian Young's video on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKC0sohdGw> . Indeed, subscribe to Ian Young's Bulb Log – he has written a detailed description, with pictures, of his garden in Aberdeen Scotland EVERY WEEK for more than 7 years. He often publishes video addenda to the written logs, on Youtube. Look for his videos on dividing Dactylorhiza, some of his are enormous.

Visit us at <http://www.gardensatposthill.net> for more information about hardy terrestrial orchids.

