

Psychmorchis pusilla



Psychmorchis is a genus of a handful species found in Latin America. The miniature plants are odd looking and have a disproportionate large single flower. It flowers so often that some people say, because the plants have a short life span, that “it flowers itself to death”. Allegedly, plants older than five years are extremely rare and most die by the time they are three. I bought a flask, about 40 little seedlings, and after 3 years I still have a dozen healthy plants that flower almost every fortnight. I hope I will break the five years record.

Psychmorchis orchids lack pseudo-bulbs, are epiphytes and grow well on twigs or cork. The leaves can grow up to 5cm long and 1 cm wide, fan shaped, and grow in one direction only. The roots are very sensitive and unreliable. Roots can be 1-2 cm long for months and then, for no reason, can grow up to 6 cm long in a few days. I have never seen roots larger than 6 cm.

Unlike other epiphytes the roots are not capable of supporting the plants because they do not “anchor” well. There are plants with too small or nonexistent roots. Lack of roots does not stop the plant from growing and flowering (see Photo below).



Plants with out roots can grow anywhere, including the forest floor.

When I firstly noticed plants with very small roots, I thought given time the plants will form reasonable size roots if I look after them and I did. I used long pins to “anchor” them on cork but the roots never managed to grow enough and anchor. (See Photo bellow)



There are also a few claims that are not supported by facts. 1. “Several flowers are produced in succession from the same inflorescence”. That is probably not true. Each inflorescence could theoretically produce up to 3 flowers; however, it produces ONLY one. 2. Regarding water. I believe the plants love moisture. “Spraying” a few times every day is a must for healthy roots. Sometimes I let the “cork” float on water over night.

The plants must be protected from the sun. Only minutes of direct sunlight can dry out the leaves and roots, and the plant will die in days.

Another issue never mentioned is that *Psychmorchis* can produce keikis. I was surprised when a small plant produced two, as this has never been reported before (See Photo bellow)



Many plants die from a fungal or bacterial disease. Some leaves do rot (See Photo bellow) but roots remain healthy.



Two months after I removed the rotten leaves the plant is not only alive but it s growing and flowered twice (See bellow). This proves that plants are very hardy, but for reasons unknown die young.



Psygmorchis pusila is the most common species. Flower size: 1.5 to 4 cm long; 1 to 2 cm wide. The flowers differ widely in size and colors. (Photo 4)

Slugs, snails and caterpillars attack the leaves. You can see the “round hole” a caterpillar left behind (Photo 3).

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