

## Achimenes and their close cousins, Smithiantha, Eucodonia and other crosses

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While quite different in appearance, these species appear to be fairly closely related as they cross readily and share certain morphological characteristics. All produce scaly rhizomes as part of their root structure, and are readily propagated from these. Their ranges in South and Central America overlap.

A number of intergeneric hybrids have been produced, including *xAchimenantha* (*Achimenes* x *Smithiantha*), *xAchicodonia* (*Achimenes* x *Eucodonia*) and *xSmithicodonia* (*Smithiantha* x *Eucodonia*).

In general, these plants are good and decorative subjects for the indoor light garden or the tropical greenhouse. Most are grown for their attractive flowers, although some species and hybrids of *Smithiantha* also produce very attractive hairy and plush foliage. There are cultivars of *Eucodonia* that are grown almost exclusively for their attractive foliage, for instance *E.* 'Naomi'.

*Achimenes* is the most widely grown of this group, and is particularly popular in Europe. It can be grown outdoors in the summer, and has been used in a fashion similar to tuberous begonias. They will also do well in North America when planted outside in a richly organic soil, in a partially shady location, and kept well watered. The roots must be kept cool, and if they are the plants will tolerate some direct sun, although dappled shade is best. The upright (non-trailing) forms are best suited for garden culture.

Most members of this group do well in a moderately well-drained medium that is kept evenly moist and not allowed to dry out. They are moderate feeders, and should have a mild fertilizer solution applied with some regularity during their periods of heavy growth. All will move toward dormancy after a period of active growth and flowering, and should be allowed to die back. Rhizomes can be harvested -- each plant will usually produce many rhizomes for each one originally planted.

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