

## The Vanda Lifecycle

In this article we will discuss the basic lifecycle of the Vanda Genus. While being primarily about these beautiful plants the lifecycle of most orchids will be similar, however the time frames may vary significantly. Many orchids within the various genus grow more quickly or slowly than Vanda Orchids.

It is noted that we will only be referring to orchids grown from seed in this article and exclude the process known as mericloneing.

So let's begin, when a hybridizer views their plants they are looking for certain characteristics from each parent that they believe will supply an improved overall result. The common aspects looked for may include the size of the blooms, the colour, the display or even the flower count. Whatever the decision is for picking the two parents they must be cross pollinated to commence the process. This is done by taking the pollen from one flower, known as the pollen parent, and placing it onto the reproductive stigma of the other parent. This parent will carry the seed pod, and therefore is known as the pod parent.

Once this process has been completed it only takes a few days, in most cases, to see the flower starting to collapse and the ovary begin to swell. This process can take a little longer in some plants and the difference may not be noticeable for a week or so.

Over the coming period the ovary will continue to swell forming a seed pod, which will vary in size depending on the parents. Once formed on the plant they will need to continue to grow and the seed will need to mature. This process will take between six and twelve months on Vanda plants dependant on the parents. Each seed pod holds up to two million individual seeds which in nature are dispersed by the wind and only a very small percentage ever germinate.



In controlled laboratory conditions however the germination and success rates are much higher. At this point however, it is important to note that many seed

Pods end up containing no or few fertile seeds and it can be very frustrating when no germination occurs after such effort.

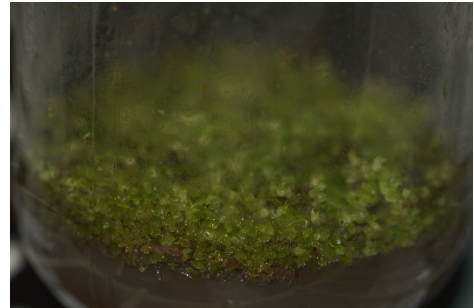


Once the seed pod has matured and is successfully harvested, the seed is then carefully placed on to a high nutrient mix, known as agar, inside bottles known as flasks.

If all goes well the seeds will start to germinate within one to twelve months from when they are placed on the growing media.

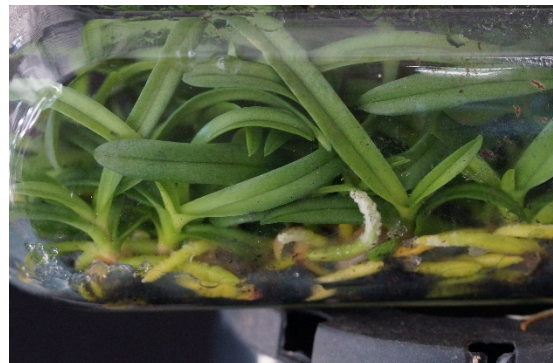
As they commence their lives as orchids they appear as a green carpet as seen in this photo.

This is actually many baby orchids inside the flask; the small plants will stay in this flask for a further six to twelve months before they need to be spread out and supplied with a new high nutrient mix.



By taking a small section of the baby plants and spreading them into a new flask they can grow larger and commence forming leaves and roots. This process all takes time and it is usually eighteen months or so from the initial seed gathering until you reach this stage.

Growth continues and the plants begin to look more like what we commonly see in small tube stock. When the plants are approximately two years old they will be ready to be removed from the flask and commence life in pots.





It is an exciting time for the hybridist as their efforts begin life in the nursery and the excitement grows awaiting the first flowering of a plant that they have produced. Having said that, within the Vanda Genus that first elusive flower spike is still around four years away.

There you have it, an adult plant with its first flowers proudly displaying, and whether it is the new show bench winner or more commonly something that turned out 'not so well' or 'not as expected' we still love it, as any parent would love their own child.



After all no orchid is a bad orchid, especially if it is a Vanda!!