

Orchids



GROW OUTDOORS

Mexican Laelias

Laelia, a genus of orchids that originated in Central and South America, is closely related to Cattleya, the well known corsage orchids of the 60s. A group of Laelias known as the 'Mexican Laelias' are especially favoured by orchid growers the world over for their ease of growth and ability to excel in various climatic conditions.

Mexican Laelias have elongated, ovoid pseudobulbs and a single leaf per bulb. They normally flower in autumn, producing between three and twelve flowers (depending on the species) in colours ranging from a pink that is so light it is almost white to a dark bright pink. The flowers last for about three to four weeks. The climatic conditions of the area in Mexico where these plants originate is

very similar to the climate in Gauteng, with the exception that Gauteng does not get mist as frequently and that some places in Johannesburg tend to get a bit colder in winter. It is thus easy to see why we can grow these orchids outdoors all year round in most parts of our country.

Mexican Laelias do best when mounted on a piece of wood or on a tree where they receive dappled light or morning or afternoon sun. If they are to be grown in pots then a free-draining mix should be used; they are also suited to basket culture. New growths appear in spring and will flower in autumn when they have matured. Plants will benefit from regular feeding during the growing period. A drier winter rest is required to prevent root rot when they are not in an

active growth phase.

Various hybrids have been developed utilising the cold tolerance of **LAELIA anceps**. They are available in a range of different colours, depending on the other parent, but most favour the **LAELIA anceps** shape. Laelia species from Mexico include: **LAELIA anceps**, **L. autumnalis**, **L. albida** and **L. gouldiana**. The magenta coloured **Sic. Hsin Buu Lady**, pastel coloured **Lc. Puppy Love** and sunset coloured **L. amoena** and **Lc. Tropical Sunrise** are just some of the many hybrids available. ☺

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