

Orchids for Dummies **By Steve Frowine**

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Orchids for Dummies” A Must Read

Promoted as “the fun and easy way to grow the world’s most amazing flowers,” Steven A. Frowine’s new orchid book belongs in every orchid hobbyist library. The 260-some page soft back is packed with photos including eight pages in full color and a handy guide on how to select the right orchids, keep them healthy, encourage blooms and even propagate your own plants.

Contents at a glance cover –

- Best Orchids for Rookies
- Ten Easiest Orchids to Grow
- Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions
- Ten Most Common Reasons Why Orchids Don’t Bloom
- Ten Most Common Ways Orchids Are Killed

Author Frowine is a professional horticulturalist who grows more than 200 orchids in his Connecticut home. He first started growing orchids under lights when he was in high school. He tended orchids professionally as a horticulturalist, when he worked in Hawaii at the National Tropical Botanical Garden and at the Missouri Botanical Garden, where he was Chairman of Indoor Horticulture and managed one of the largest orchid collections in the United States – over 10,000 plants.

“Orchid names are in Latin, which is a challenge for most people to pronounce and remember. Don’t worry about it. Just get into these names gradually. With such a complex group of plants comes names and jargon to match. This aspect of orchid growing is what scares most people off. Don’t let this happen to you! They are just names and words that scientists have assigned to plants because they had to call them something.”

Glen Decker of Piping Rock Orchids, Galway, New York, served as the technical editor of this highly educational and enjoyable read. A copy has been donated to the ROA library. Frowine’s second book, “FragrantOrchids,” will be released this fall.

- Bayne Hawkins

Orchids For Dummies: Another Perspective

In *Orchids for Dummies*, author Steven A. Frowine has employed very successfully the format of previous *For Dummies* books, that is, each chapter begins with a list of subjects to be covered in the chapter. Then, in an introductory paragraph, the author tells us what he's going to tell us. Then he tells us.

The book is organized into four major sections, an introduction to orchids, culture, lists of orchids suggested for beginners and a section on FAQs, problems with orchids and easiest orchids for the beginner. Each section includes several chapters. While the organization is certainly logical any of the sections can be read beneficially in any order or independently. The first section lists guidelines for beginners to evaluate their particular potential orchid growing environments for light, temperature, space, etc. and suggests several easy-to-grow orchids that are appropriate for each environment. Unfortunately most beginners purchase their first orchids without benefit of this information. Maybe, when their first orchids expire they will borrow or purchase *Orchids for Dummies* before their second try.

The second section is a godsend for beginners. Most orchid books cover culture in a series of generalities, much to the frustration of the beginner who looking for specifics. *Orchids for Dummies* gives these specific cultural conditions. The third section presents various orchids suitable for beginners. They are grouped as moth orchids, cattleyas, slipper orchids and *oncidiums*. Each listing includes a brief descriptive paragraph of the orchid. It looks like the author listed his own collection.

The last section is a good wrap-up. It lists the ten easiest orchids to grow, the ten most common ways to kill an orchid, the ten most frequently asked questions and the ten most common reasons why orchids won't bloom.

Generally this is a well-edited book but there are a few nits to pick.

- On page 14 the author mentions *grevia*, a term familiar to only a few beginners. He does define it later on.
- *Degamroara* was misspelled several times as *Deganorara*. He fails to mention that *Catasetums* have both male and female flowers, a very significant characteristic of this genus.

This is an excellent book for beginners – for experienced orchidists also – and that is what it is intended to be. If one wants a more definitive work your reviewer suggests *Home Growing Orchids* by Rebecca Tyson Northen.

- L.K. (Buddy) Harvie

“Orchids for Dummies” Maximizing A New Member’s Perspective

This book lives up to its title! It provides all one needs to know about growing and appreciating the realm of bloom orchids, in a very clear, concise manner.

It is almost as if Steven Frownie is holding an amateur orchid grower’s hand while taking them to a journey of the orchid world through his book. The book is very well organized; it is divided into four parts, and each part contains several chapters, which are very lucid, stand-alone pieces, combining easy reference with information, thus simplifying the exotic esoteric world of orchids to a very terrestrial level.

Part I indulges the reader with the basic knowledge about orchids and how they differ from other plants, and explores its appeal and how to fully enjoy this plant in one’s home. It goes on to provide tips about selecting an orchid, its basic care, and the tools required for an amateur grower. Even a novice will get hooked to orchids just reading the first 4 chapters!

Part II discusses the specifics of “parenting” an orchid and the optimal growing environment that one must provide in order to grow a healthy plant. He explains about the watering treatments and fertilizing methodologies and the art of repotting and propagation.

Part III sheds light on popular, easy to grow orchids. These explanations are coupled with superb illustrations, thus helping the reader to bravely venture into this delightful plant kingdom.

Finally, Part IV has a wealth of useful information, ranging from intricate details about the Orchid and its culture, to ten most common reasons why orchids do not bloom. Apart from its excellent organization, the book has five types of icons, and plenty of excellent, colorful pictures, thus adding truth to the statement that a picture is worth a thousand words.

In conclusion, the book, Orchids for Dummies provides all the information needed to make educated decisions regarding orchids. I recommend it as a “must read” guideline for anyone who wants to indulge into the beautiful, mysterious world of orchids. In his book, Steven Frownie articulately dispels the myth that these glamorous, spectacular flowering plants are not really intimidating to grow, just like every being, a little TLC goes a very long way!

- Hema Subramanyam