

Orchid Spring

For the past five growing seasons, I have raised orchids. No, not exotic orchids that might be associated with eccentric rich men puttering around in upscale greenhouses located on their estates; just run-of-the-mill white or purple orchids found in local nurseries, farmers' markets, and Trader Joe's. Last year (2005), in my bedroom corner windows, I had orchids in bloom for 11 months. Once every week, on Monday, I faithfully attended to their needs – a thorough watering at the kitchen sink; two hours later, the application of liquid fertilizer via a watering can; then carefully returning them to the safety of their corner window pots.

The orchid budding season has begun again, not in March and April as an outdoor gardener might expect, but in November. Today I counted 11 buds, which will produce a total of 55 orchid blooms. Not all at once, thank goodness, but over the course of 2006, until the last bloom grows limp and falls from the plant in late October. But never satisfied, I am hopeful that as many as six more buds will appear before the middle of December, which by my count would give me a bumper crop.

I do not speculate whether my orchid production is average or above. I do not pretend to know whether my cultivating practices are standard or not. I do not claim any expertise in raising orchids. But if tender loving care, daily observation, faithful watering and fertilizing, and light pruning have contributed to my success, I plead guilty.