

Vanilla



Common Name: Vanilla

Scientific Name: *Vanilla odorata*, *Vanilla fragans* and *Vainilla planifolia*

Climate: Tropical semi dry forest with low relative humidity

Plant Description: Vanilla is an orchid native to México, in its natural habitat it grows on top of tree branches with a woody rhizome and a long cylindrical hanging stem that could reach 10 meters long.

It grows big, oval, fleshy leaves, with aerial roots sprouting from the knots and beautiful white, green speckled or yellow flowers on the axils.

The fruits are hard long cylindrical pods, about 12cm long with numerous seeds inside.

Cultivation: Growing vanilla is complicated because the plant grows in very specific environment. First it's important to create the ideal conditions for the orchid to grow, like a warm and humid weather with controlled sun exposure and artificial pollination.

Vanilla can be reproduced in two different ways:

1. By meristems, that are little plant tissues responsible for growth, stay always young, present division ability and from them all the other cells are created. The meristem need to be grown in a greenhouse until it reaches 1 to 2 meters high and then it can be transplanted to the field with organic soil and mycorrhizae.
2. By cuttings. This method is a little faster because it is possible to start a plant from a cutting that is already 1 or 1.5 meters long. Keep it submerged in water for 5 days, then transferred to a special soil blend for orchids and tied to a stake for guided support as it grows. It must be watered regularly to keep the soil moist.

Vanilla will bloom from 2 to 7 years of age, depending on the heat.

Conditions: In order to grow vanilla you must like plants, and willing to invest time and money

since the first crop takes a minimum 4 years to yield.

The plant must be planted next to a tree or a guide that will allow it to climb on it. The plant needs some sun, but some shade, too.

Vanilla will bloom from 2 to 7 years of age, after which pollination must be done by hand because the natural pollinizers only inhabit a small region in Mexico. The pods take 7 months to a year to grow and be ready for harvest. Once harvested they are processed, cured and dried in strictly controlled conditions.



Uses: The main active ingredient is vanillin. It

possesses very exquisite aromatic attributes, it is used in pastry, beverages and perfumery products.

As therapeutic uses it's possible to find it as a nervous system stimulant, depression and anxiety support, muscle and inflammation pain relief.

References:

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