The easiest Orchid to grow is the Epidendrum reed stem orchid. This particular orchid grows on the side of the road in Mexico and Central America. It can survive in direct sunlight and if left in the shade it might not blossom.

The more popular orchid is the Phalaenopsis which also is easy to grow. The Phalaenopsis needs bright light with no direct sunlight. This orchid is popular with customers at the big box stores.

The orchid is engineered and specially created to sell. Temperature and chemicals are controlled to get the orchid to blossom earlier. After the blossoms fall off the plant might look dead but it usually is not. The orchid needs to be repotted. Re-blooming this orchid might take more than a year.

If the Orchid did die you will find that it was tightly packed in moss which has retained too much moisture or it was not watered and the roots are black, mushy or all dried up. Signs that the orchid was getting into trouble are the lines and grooves that you would see in the leaves.

Purchasing orchids from reputable orchid suppliers you probably would not have this situation, as it would have been grown differently.

Washing the roots with a steady stream of water the roots will begin to separate. With some effort tugging at the roots and untangling them you can begin to identify the damaged roots and cut them off.

Never put an orchid plant in potting soil. The roots need air circulation.

There are several different kinds of medium that can be used such as Clay Balls, Bark, Charcoal, Stones or Packing Styrofoam. Bark will rot in time. Charcoal might develop bacteria or fungus. Packing Styrofoam does not absorb any water. Clay balls are perfect. It is said by the experts to use the smallest pot as possible, because the roots like to be restricted. The orchid should not be put too deeply into the pot. Some of the roots should be exposed. The clay balls will not compress and will not rot. Put a small amount of moss on the top of the pot to cover the roots. The moss on top is your measure as how moist the medium is. If the moss on top feels dry and hardened it's time to water. You could also place the clear ventilated plastic pot

inside a colored decorative pot. Checking the water this way simply lift the orchid pot and exam the roots. If the roots are green no water is needed. If the roots are white then water. Flush the pot for several seconds to wash out the salts and other unwanted minerals. Then mist the roots and leaves with fertilized water. Be sure not to use water that has been treated by a water softener that uses salt. Never water the blossoms. Rain water is the best.

With the orchid getting air circulation proper amounts of water and adequate light you will have blossoms and the orchid will live for a long time.

The orchid can also be hung without the pot on a wire or attached to a tree with the roots completely open to the air. These arrangements usually require watering each day. Don't water after 3:00 p.m. to give the plant plenty of time for the moisture to evaporate. Water not evaporated from the crown or between the leaves is where crown rot can develop. If the orchid gets crown rot you can pretty much say goodbye to the orchid.

Light is a very important factor. If the orchid never blooms, it is quite possible that the orchid did not get enough light. Orchids kept in more shaded area leaves will be darker green. Orchids kept in brighter light leaves might be more yellowish.

Vanda orchids and reed stem orchids require direct sunlight with possibly some shade during the noontime hours. The orchids that do not require direct sunlight and if exposed to direct sunlight will get sunburned. A black spot or patch will appear at the sunburned spots on the leaf and then fungus or bacteria might develop and kill the orchid. If this happens the affected area can be cut off and possible save the Orchid.

It's advised that you burn your cutting tool with a flame to kill bacteria before you make the cut. Diseases do travel through orchids. Orchids can also transfer viruses with contact from plant to plant or by insects. An indication that a virus has infected the orchid will be imperfections in the blossoms. The orchid can be isolated from other orchids if it is a valuable orchid or you enjoy seeing the blossoms.

Another risk factor for orchids is the consideration of temperatures, especially if the orchid is outside or attached to a tree. Vanda orchids should not be exposed to temperatures below 50 degrees. Other orchids can be exposed to temperatures in the middle 40s. If an orchid is damaged by low temperatures

in just a few days spots might appear on the leaves and the leaf will become mushy. The damaged parts can be cut off and possibly save the orchid.

It usually takes many years to become an expert with orchids. You have to have lots of battle scars and a lot of dead orchids. Once a person learns the proper way to water the type of orchid they have the orchid will probably grow. When they learn to give the orchid proper amount of light it will probably blossom. By protecting it from extreme temperatures it will probably live.

To get the orchid to do better and to become a showpiece, learning how to apply fertilizer will make you so proud of yourself. You will have nice big pretty blossoms.

Usually give the orchids one quarter of the amount of fertilizer that's recommended on the label. Too much fertilizer will definitely hurt orchids.

Becoming a member of the Gainesville Orchid Society or the St Augustine Orchid Society will help you to better understand the care and growing of orchids. You will also meet some really great people and lots of friends and great times.

There is usually a silent auction and a raffle.

Gainesville meets the fourth Monday of each month and St Augustine meets the first Tuesday of each month. On average there's somewhere between 50 to 75 people attending.

This presentation is just the very basics for caring for orchids and helping you to be successful in growing them. There is so much more to learn and it is very interesting what we learn at each one of the meetings. We get presentations from local experts and other experts from around the world.

The (staugorchidsociety.org) website has an outstanding amount of information in regards to orchids. They are equal to or better than the more wildly known organizations. You can ask questions and get answers.

Learn from your own experience and what you're successful with and pretty much find your own answers through trial and error.

If you make enough mistakes you'll become an expert at orchids.