

Guidelines for the use of uniform symbols for the care of pot plants by consumers

Basic principles of care symbols for pot plants

These guidelines contain all the details about the use of uniform symbols that provide consumers with care information. The uniform care symbols were developed by the Chain Communication workgroup of Orchidee Nederland.

The symbols will help make the care of plants seem less complicated for consumers. The consumer survey that the Chain Communication workgroup had conducted revealed that the presence of a label with clear information was an important point of consideration when buying for many consumers. By making the instruction symbols uniform and applicable to all pot plants, the information becomes clear and simple for the consumer. In due course people will recognise the symbols used, and care of the plants will no longer be an obstacle to purchasing them.

In consumer surveys the symbols have been tested for relevance (is this the information that the consumer is looking for?) and comprehension (does the consumer understand what the symbol means?). This determined the appearance and the order in which the information was presented.

Their practical applicability was also an important topic. The use of details and text was kept to a minimum. This helps prevent problems when printing on small labels and translating them into other languages.

By employing a clear, uniform and simple form of communication about the care of plants, the information can be easily understood and the symbols will become recognisable in due course. People will learn that certain symbols always mean the same thing. The more often the symbols are used uniformly, the better they will be recognised.

Location

The symbol specifying where a houseplant can be placed is a sun. A warning triangle indicates that direct sunlight should be avoided. Plants like light (some like lots of it). But there are a few plants which are sensitive to direct sunlight or being exposed to full sun.



May be placed in full sun: These plants may be placed where they are exposed to direct sunlight.



Beware of full sun: These plants may not be exposed to full and direct sun, due to a risk of burning the leaves. A bright area where the sun does not shine in directly is good. A north-facing window or behind a sun screen would be perfect.

Watering

The symbol for watering is a watering can with a varying number of drops. Alternatives include a plant sprayer or the symbol for immersing. The symbols specify a frequency in text and an indication of the quantity of water by the number of drops.

Plants need water to grow. But they differ in the amount of water they need. The way of administering the water can also be specific. In all cases pot plants must never stand with their ball of soil in the water because that can lead to problems (roots rot).



A little water once every 2 weeks: A watering can with one drop and text stating 1x/2wk specifies that this plant requires little water, like succulents and cacti. The potting soil must be dry between waterings.



Spraying once per week: A plant sprayer with text stating 1x/wk specifies that this plant must be sprayed instead of watering the soil. Some orchids and succulents prefer this.



Moderate water once per week: A watering can with two drops and text stating 1x/wk specifies that this plant likes a moderate amount of water. It is best if the potting soil never dries out entirely.



Lots of water twice per week: A watering can with three drops and text stating 2x/wk specifies that this plant likes a lot of water. The potting soil will always be evenly moist.



Immersing once per week: A pot plant with the pot in a tray of water specifies that this plant likes its ball of soil to be immersed for a short period (10 minutes) in water. After immersing, the water must be allowed to drain out.

Fertilising

The symbol for fertilising is a bottle of plant food with a cap and a text indication of how often to add it.

Plants require minerals in order to grow. There are many different products available on the market for consumers. This symbol states whether a plant needs a lot or a little food. Further details can be found on the label of the food product. Too much or too little food can damage the plants.



Fertiliser once every 2 months: This plant needs little food and thus once every two months is sufficient. Consult the label of the fertiliser product for the exact concentration to be used.



Fertiliser once per month: This plant requires a moderate amount of food. Giving fertiliser once per month is sufficient at the concentration recommended on the product.



Fertiliser twice per month: This plant needs a lot of food. Once every two weeks is essential.

Temperature

The symbol for temperature is a thermometer specifying the minimum and maximum limits. The temperature range gives an indication of a plant's preferred environmental temperature. The plant will not be acutely damaged as soon as that range is exceeded, but higher temperatures can lead to accelerated flowering, dried-out buds and limp plants. Extreme temperatures well outside the indicated range can lead to immediate damage.

Along with the amount of sunlight, the temperature is important for plant growth. Some plants prefer lower or higher temperatures. For houseplants room temperature is usually best. That is why this symbol is placed later on the label in the row of symbols and must be considered a recommendation.



Minimum 5°C, Maximum 15°C: This plant likes a cooler location with temperatures between 5 and 15°C. (Primula, Azalea, Viola)



Minimum 15°C, Maximum 25°C: This plant is at home in most interiors.



Minimum 20°C, Maximum 35°C: This plant likes a warm, practically tropical environment and will have difficulty growing at lower temperatures.

Plant-specific symbols

The symbol varies according to the specific information and is based on the intended instructions.

For some plants consumers know that carrying out specific actions will lead to the plant staying beautiful for longer or flowering again. This information is important because consumers look for it and do not feel well informed if it is missing.

Which information should be added for a specific plant depends on the product group, and a consumer survey may have to be conducted to produce new symbols.



Pruning, after the flower has finished flowering: The symbol is a pot plant with pruning shears cutting off the flower. Phalaenopsis (and some other plants) can be encouraged to flower several times in this way.

Consumption

Consumption refers to specifying whether it can be consumed by humans or pets. Retailers in particular like to inform consumers about whether a plant is edible (harmless to humans and animals).



Suitable for consumption: These plants can be consumed in their entirety, like **basil and other herbs**.



Fruits suitable for consumption: Parts of these plants are suitable for consumption by humans, like **miniature cucumbers, tomatoes**.



Poisonous for pets: This symbol specifies that the product is not intended for consumption, and in addition is also poisonous for pets. For example, **lilies** can make cats ill.



Not suitable for consumption: These plants are not suitable for consumption by either humans or animals.

On the VBN website there is a list of possibly edible plants and a description of the legislation concerning the declaration of the consumability of plants or parts of plants.

More information

Each label will have space for mentioning a website or other site that contains more detailed information about the product.

For orchids the website www.orchidsinfo.eu provides this information. It explains the symbols and gives instructions of caring for the product.

The grower or other party may state their own web address.

Use of symbols

The symbols may be freely used for designing labels, plant sleeves or other materials on which instructions for consumers can be printed. They are downloaded as print files from

- Orchidee Nederland website: www.orchidsinfo.eu
- VBN website: www.vbn.nl

There are a few rules for using the symbols:

- Each label has 7 positions. To prevent the information being considered confusing, no more than 7 positions may be filled.
- If the instructions for a product require only 5 positions, for example, then 7 symbols do not have to be used. Fewer positions are possible.
- The order of the symbols is fixed. If a symbol is missing, the following symbols move up a place. This order must be maintained:
 - Location
 - Watering
 - Temperature
 - Fertilising
 - Plant-specific symbols
 - Consumption
 - Web address
- Text and symbol belong together. The content of the chosen instruction / text may not differ from the official, available combinations. The following is **not** permitted:
 - Making a new combination of symbols with existing text
 - Changing symbols
 - Combining existing symbols with new text
- Within product groups agreements must be made about which symbols to choose, and thus a standard label must be established for that product group.
- The instructions for a group of plants may not deviate within a product group.
- Symbols may be used with or without text.
- The following adjustments of the symbol **are** permitted:
 - Adjusting the size of the symbol to the label or material being printed (the symbols may only be enlarged or shrunk in proportion)
 - Symbols may be printed in the colour of the production company's or customer's housestyle
 - Text may be printed in the colour of the production company's or customer's housestyle.

Changes to the existing symbols, texts, order and new combinations will damage the uniformity and the clarity of the system. The more uniform the use of the symbols, the greater the effect on consumer recognition. The consumer will soon

learn what the symbols stand for. This process is comparable to the care symbols on clothing labels.

Imprint

Information and downloads

The uniform symbols can be downloaded free of charge from the VBN website (www.vbn.nl) or Orchidee Nederland (www.orchidsinfo.eu). You can also find the guidelines for the use of these symbols on these websites.

Copyright

The intellectual property rights on the work or the files of the symbols belong exclusively to FloraHolland. It is not permitted to change these uniform care symbols without prior written approval from FloraHolland.

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List of care symbols

Meaning of symbol	Symbol	Text
Location		
1A		MAY BE PLACED IN FULL SUN
1B		BEWARE OF FULL SUN
Watering		
2A		A LITTLE WATER ONCE EVERY 2 WEEKS
2B		SPRAYING ONCE A WEEK
2C		MODERATE WATER ONCE A WEEK
2D		LOTS OF WATER TWICE A WEEK
2E		IMMERSING ONCE A WEEK
Fertilising		
3A		FERTILISING ONCE EVERY 2 MONTHS
3B		FERTILISING ONCE A MONTH
3C		FERTILISING TWICE A MONTH

Temperature		
4A		MAX 15°C MIN 5°C
4B		MAX 25°C MIN 15°C
4C		MAX 35°C MIN 20°C
Specific information		
5A		PRUNE FLOWER AFTER FLOWERING IS OVER
Consumption		
6A		SUITABLE FOR CONSUMPTION
6B		FRUITS SUITABLE FOR CONSUMPTION
6C		POISONOUS FOR PETS
6D		NOT SUITABLE FOR CONSUMPTION