

❄️ Winter Orchid Care: Keep Your Orchids Thriving

Winter brings new challenges for our orchids. **Whether you are a novice or an experienced grower**, our two-part guide has practical advice to help your plants stay healthy through the colder months.

- New to orchids?** Start with the basics.
Experienced grower? Go deeper with advanced winter-care tips.

Choose your level and discover how to give your orchids the care they need this winter.

Winter Orchid Care in Northeast Florida

A Quick-Reference Guide for *New Growers* • Jacksonville Orchid Society

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

Have cold-tender orchids (Vanda, Phalaenopsis-type Dendrobium, seedlings) moved indoors by November 1. For everything else, watch the forecast: bring plants under protection any time a night in the 40s or below is predicted, not just on a calendar date.

Why September Matters

Jacksonville's average first fall frost is November 28, but 1 in 5 years brings frost by November 10, and hard Arctic outbreaks (such as January 2024 and January 2026, with lows near 20–22°F) can arrive with only a few days' warning. Attending an orchid sale in September is exactly the right time to plan your winter space — not November.

Genus-by-Genus Action Thresholds

Genus	Protect indoors when forecast low is:	Winter watering	Key note
Cattleya (hybrids)	45-50°F	Weekly; let dry between	Species need individual research — timing varies widely
Dendrobium – Soft-cane/nobile	35°F if kept DRY	Cut back sharply; keep dry	Leaf drop in winter is normal, not a problem
Dendrobium – Phalaenopsis-type (hard cane)	55-60°F	Reduce; do not dry out	Treat like a Phalaenopsis, NOT like nobile types
Oncidium	50-55°F	Weekly; let dry between	A few species tolerate to 40°F — check before assuming
Vanda	55°F	Never let roots stay cold + wet	Blue vandas (V. coerulea lineage) tolerate cooler nights

Cold-Snap Emergency Checklist

- Move Vanda/Phalaenopsis-type plants first — they are the least cold-tolerant.
- For Cattleya, Dendrobium, and Oncidium, withhold water 24–48 hrs before a hard freeze — dry roots handle cold far better than wet roots.
- Never let Vanda or Phalaenopsis roots go both cold AND dry — mist lightly instead of soaking.
- A cool garage, enclosed porch, or single incandescent/space heater in a small greenhouse is often enough — you do not need 65°F, just above the plant's threshold.
- Frost cloth (not plastic) touching leaves overnight can still cause cold burn where it contacts the plant.

One Rule Worth Repeating

Species orchids are far less forgiving than hybrids. If a tag says only the genus name (e.g., “Cattleya”) it is almost certainly a hybrid and can follow the table above. If it has two Latin names (e.g., “Cattleya walkeriana”) look it up before winter — timing and dry-rest needs vary by species.

Source: Russell, A. (2026). *General Guidance for Wintering Orchids (Version 3)*, Jacksonville Orchid Society, and NOAA/NWS Jacksonville climate normals. Full species-level detail available in the companion reference workbook.

NE Florida Winter Orchid Care — Species-Level Reference

For *Experienced Growers* • Jacksonville Orchid Society

BLUF

Genus-level thresholds understate risk for species plants. Cross-check every species-labeled acquisition against this table or the full reference workbook before setting your personal cutoff — rest timing, dry tolerance, and mount orientation are frequently species-specific and not interchangeable within a genus.

Selected Species Requiring Individualized Handling

Species	Min °F	Rest?	Notes
C. dowiana / C. nobilior	45-50	Yes – strict dry	Rot risk if watered in rest; C. nobilior needs horizontal mount
C. walkeriana	40	Minimal	DO NOT let dry completely despite reduced water
C. intermedia / C. dolosa	32	No	Field-hardy to upper teens historically; bright winter light
C. violacea / C. chocoensis	60	Minimal	Do not like ANY cool weather – keep warmest of the alliance
Encyclia tampensis (native)	20	No	Never let dry fully even though cold-hardy
Den. nobile-type (Sect. Dendrobium 1/2)	35 (dry)	Yes – required	High light, no fertilizer; can approach freezing if dry
Den. bigibbum (Phal-type)	60	Yes	Treat as Cattleya-adjacent, NOT like nobile types
Vanda / Ascocenda (V. coerulea lineage)	50-55	No	Tolerates cooler nights better; improves flower color
Zygopetalum	40-47	No, but needs cool snap	Requires some cool weather (upper 40s) to spike

NE Florida Climate Anchors (2026)

First frost (avg / early 20%): Nov 28 / Nov 10. Last frost (avg / late 30%): Mar 5 / Mar 18. Freeze days/yr: ~4, typically clustered in single Arctic outbreaks (e.g., 22°F Jan 2024; 20s°F Jan 2026).

Two Judgment Calls Worth Discussing at This Meeting

- Dry-rest species (C. dowiana, C. nobilior, Den. nobile types) grown alongside no-rest species in the same greenhouse zone — recommend physically separating water schedules rather than compromising on a single zone-wide regimen.
- Native Encyclia tampensis and other field-collected-adjacent material: cold-hardy but not drought-hardy — do not let low temperature tolerance be read as low water tolerance.

Source: Russell, A. (2026). General Guidance for Wintering Orchids (Version 3), Annexes A–B, Jacksonville Orchid Society; NOAA/NWS Jacksonville climate normals. Full 60+ species table in the companion Excel reference workbook.