



1. Strelitzia

## Guide to growing Plants under glass

**Lauren Tyler**, an intern at the Princess of Wales Conservatory in Kew Gardens, recommends the best plants to grow under glass for colour and year-round interest

Conservatories provide the perfect conditions to grow exotic and unusual plants from tropical regions, which otherwise would not survive in our wet and cold climate. There is plenty of choice when it comes to varieties too, including tropical, edible, ornamental, cacti, succulents, bromeliads, orchids and ferns. And while you won't be able to grow all of these at the same time or in the same place (as some species need different environments from others),

with a bit of care you'll be richly rewarded.

Conservatories offer shelter from the elements and good levels of light, but this can result in the room being too hot and dry in the summer. Most conservatories do not have the ventilation and shading that a greenhouse can offer, so try using screens or blinds to prevent scorch and open doors or windows to allow air to circulate.

It's also worth considering the aspect of the conservatory, as this will affect the types of plants you can grow. A south-facing position

may obtain good light levels and warmth, but as temperatures peak in midsummer, plants can scorch. An east- or west-facing aspect will produce more consistent growing conditions, less temperature fluctuation and brighter, less direct sunlight.

Mimicking the conditions plants face in their natural habitat is essential. If you want to grow tropical plants, maintain constant temperatures and provide heat in winter. During summer months, mist plants and lay on trays of wet gravel to raise humidity. ▶

**CREATE an impressive display using a mix of climbers, compact varieties, standard and pot-grown, making the most of shelves, hanging baskets, window sills and ground-level containers. Some plants can be bedded out for the summer months into borders (or moved in their pots) then brought back indoors for the winter. For small- to medium-sized conservatories and glasshouses, keep plants in containers to help control their size.**

### EIGHT CHOICE INDOOR PLANTS

**1 Strelitzia** (Min 10°C) Grow in full light, shaded from hot sun. Top dress annually and repot every two years. *Strelitzia reginae* 'Humilis' is a dwarf suitable for containers.

**2 Aeschynanthus** (Min 15-18°C). Ideal for hanging baskets, this delicate, trailing plant has dark evergreen leaves and red flowers in summer. To encourage flowering, keep out of direct light.

**3 Bromeliads** (Min 10-15°C). Liking high light levels, this genus produces very showy, brightly coloured flowers. Humidity is required for tropical varieties so stand on trays of wet gravel and mist frequently in summer. Try aechmea and guzmania.

**4 Brugmansia** (Angel's trumpet) (Min 7°C) This evergreen shrub is covered in distinctive flowers from late spring to autumn. In warmer areas, move outdoors in summer.

**5 Cymbidium** (Min 10°C) This orchid likes filtered light and good ventilation. Mist daily and place in direct light in winter.

**6 Hibiscus** (Min 10-15°C) The tender species are best grown under glass. Try Japanese lantern *Hibiscus schizopetalus* - a beautiful evergreen with elegant, pendant pink flowers with hanging fringed stamens, or one of the showy cultivars of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*.

**7 Plumbago** (Min 7°C) Tie stems to supports and move outdoors in summer if container grown. *Plumbago auriculata* is the popular variety with beautiful powder blue flowers. Evergreen shrub or train as a climber. Height 3-6m, spread 1-3m.

**8 Tacca** (Min 13°C). Known as the bat plant. Prefers a bright filtered light. Water year round, misting regularly during the summer and pot on every two to three years. Height and spread up to 1m.

Turn to page 96 to see our conservatory plants reader offer with Thompson & Morgan.

#### TEMPERATURE GUIDE

Whether your conservatory has radiators or you use a temporary heat source, you can modify the environment to suit the plants you want to grow. For tropical varieties in a heated conservatory, temperature can be anywhere between 15-21°C; for tender varieties keep around 10°C; while a cool glasshouse with half-tender species should range between 5-7°C.



2. *Aeschynanthus*



3. *Aechmea fasciata*



4. *Brugmansia sanguinea*



# Glasshouse plants



5. *Cymbidium*



6. *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*



7. *Plumbago auriculata*



8. *Tacca integrifolia*

## OTHERS TO TRY

**Scented plants:** *Stephanotis floribunda* (Min 15°C); frangipani (Min 10-13°C).

**Climbing plants:** *Ipomoea*, *Gloriosa superba* (Min 8°C); *passiflora*, *aristolochia* (Min 7°C).

**Edible plants:** *Musa acuminata* 'Dwarf Cavendish'; citrus plants including *Punica granatum* var. *nana*.

**Carnivorous plants:** *Pinguicula*, *sarracenia*

**Cacti and succulents:** *Aeonium*, *agave*, *aloe*, *crassula*, *echeveria*, *olives* and *dry tolerant bromeliads*, such as *billbergia*.

## PROBLEMS FOR INDOOR PLANTS

● Pests and diseases are more prevalent under glass due to the warm atmosphere (whether dry or moist).

● Fungal diseases are also more likely to occur when there is a lack of ventilation and air circulation.

● Common pests to watch out for include red spider mite, greenfly, whitefly, mealy bug and scale.

● Sticky traps can be useful (although do not look very attractive). Try using a biological control, such as a butterwort plant, *Pinguicula moranensis*, to deter bugs from your other plants. Or try larvae from a beneficial insect, which will attack specific pests - *Encarsia formosa* for whitefly, *Chilocorus nigritis* for scale and *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri* for mealybug.

● Brushing alcohol onto the leaves of bromeliads or orchids is a good way to treat scale. Some insects can be removed by hand; alternatively, they can be treated by regular spraying of an indoor insecticide.

## WHERE TO BUY

● **Burncoose Nurseries**, Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ. Tel: +44 (0)1209 860316. [www.burncoose.co.uk](http://www.burncoose.co.uk)

● **Floralive**, PO Box 11985, Birmingham B31 1WF. Tel: +44 (0)1216 944828. [www.floralive.co.uk](http://www.floralive.co.uk)

● **Jungle Seeds and Gardens**, PO Box 45, Watlington SPDO, Oxon, OX49 5YR. Tel: +44 (0)1491 614765. [www.junglegardens.co.uk](http://www.junglegardens.co.uk)

● **Suttons**, Woodview Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NG. Tel: 0844 9222899. [www.suttons.co.uk](http://www.suttons.co.uk)

● **Shrubland Park**, Coddham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 9QJ. Tel: +44 (0)1473 833187. [www.shrublandparknurseries.co.uk](http://www.shrublandparknurseries.co.uk)

● **Thompson & Morgan**, Poplar Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 3BU. Tel: 0844 2485383. [www.thompson-morgan.com/plants](http://www.thompson-morgan.com/plants)