

Rhyncostylis retusa

Rhyncostylis retusa, a monopodial (vandaceous) orchid is found throughout mainland and island South East Asia. It is found at low to moderate elevations, and while the species is happier with a cooler rest period; in its natural habitat, this is dry rather than wet as is our winter. During the hotter months, it needs constant high humidity and when in active growth, regular watering.

Rhyncostylis retusa grows to about 80cm tall, with a leave span of 60-80cm across. Flowers are borne on an up to 40cm drooping raceme, closely clustered. The flowers are predominantly white, suffused with pink to violet. The lip is purple and the spur white.

In my experience, this species, like most of the vandaceous orchids is happier growing in a suspended basket where it can benefit from high air movement. If you have difficulty maintaining high humidity, it would be wise to have media in the basket to retain moisture. The trick to growing these species is to maintain all the leaves - often we see vandaceous plants that have only a few leaves at the top of a brown stem. I feel that low humidity is the problem. This species is quite hardy once established and does not seem to be affected by many of the pests, however ants will bring in scale, so take care to check under the leaves. Also they are susceptible to crown rot in the cooler months, so a preventative fungicide is a good idea.