

Cypripedium Anna



Hardy Lady's Slipper Orchids

- jewels for the shady garden

Lady's slipper orchids have always been highly regarded by garden enthusiasts as jewels for the shaded garden. In former times only the sensitive species were available. But times have changed. Michael Weinert from Frosch Exclusive Perennials, Germany, introduced vigorous and easy-to-grow Cypripedium hybrids on the market in 1997. Since then, a selection of high-quality crosses has been created, which also enables laymen to successfully grow lady's slippers in the garden. Why not trying it in your garden as well?

These fascinating Cypripedium hybrids can be grown in all areas where temperatures do not regularly exceed 30 °C (86 °F) in summer and remain below +5 °C (40 °F) for 2-3 months in winter. Temperatures below -20 °C (-4 °F) are no problem with a sufficient snow cover. No separate protection during winter is required - lady's slipper orchids are completely hardy. The planting site should be situated in semi-shade, without direct sun at midday. A very suitable place would also be on the north side of a building. Most Cypripediums are woodland plants and therefore prefer cool sites, which do not become too dry and hot during summer. Places where ferns thrive are also suitable for lady's slipper orchids. Don't plant Cypripediums close to trees or big shrubs because their roots are effective competition for water and nutrients!

The plants of "Frosch Exclusive Perennials" (www.ladyslipper.de) are grown outside without any chemical pest control in the rough climate of upper Bavaria and are totally hardy. It is not before 4-5 years in culture that the plants are sold. That's why the hobby gardeners can be sure to acquire vigorous and healthy orchids, which continue to grow without problems in their gardens. The owner Michael Weinert only wants to offer hybrids which have been positively tested under garden conditions for years (not every hybrid is automatically suitable for the garden!). In addition he aims for high quality and, therefore, concentrates on the best crosses, mostly primary hybrids which are genetically uncomplicated and have a natural look.

Under the brand name Frosch®, his nursery offers



exclusively *Cypripedium* hybrids and no species. Here are the reasons why.

Frosch® *Cypripedium* hybrids...

- are absolutely hardy (at least -25°C / -13°F, hardiness zone 4) and long-lived (tens of years).
- are not very demanding and therefore easy to grow in the garden. They are very vigorous, not least due to our natural way of raising the plants outside.
- are grown outside without any chemical pest control in the rough climate of upper Bavaria. Your resulting advantage: healthy and strong plants which grow well.

Lady's slipper orchids need a well-aerated, crumbly soil structure (4 inches deep) and medium moisture conditions. Dense and loamy soils have to be improved with mineral materials such as crushed clay pebbles or lava. If the planting site is too wet, a drainage layer with crushed clay pebbles or lava should be added. In sandy soils, which dry out rapidly, it is recommended to increase water retention by mixing in perlite, Seramis® or Isolite®. Covering the soil with a layer of conifer needles (e.g. spruce or pine) has a favourable effect on structure and moisture. Autumn is the best season for planting. Michael recommends: "Spread out the roots in the upper 10 cm of the soil, the rhizome 3 cm below the surface. Fill in the remaining substrate without compressing it, and water thoroughly. The soil should never dry out completely, therefore in dry summers careful watering is recommended."

Fertilize your lady's slipper orchids regularly in spring, necessary for strong growth. Use any granulated commercial garden fertilizer regularly in spring; best are those with a long-term effect. Apply the same quantity as for other perennials too, not less. After flowering the need for nutrients is low, but at the beginning of the growth season the need is high. Leaf coloration is a good indicator; leaves should



Left: *Cypripedium Anna*

always be bright green. A yellowish green indicates nutrient deficiency or too much sun. Compost is not recommended. Orchid fertilizers do not contain enough nutrients. Special attention has to be paid to slugs, because they can wreak havoc within one night. Particularly during springtime protecting measures are indispensable.

Lady's slipper orchids look best in combination with slow-growing ferns, barrenwort (*Epimedium*) and small *Hosta* species. They cannot compete with vigorously-growing perennials, shrubs or trees. *Leptinella* (*syn. Cotula*) has proven to be a good groundcover. This plant forms loose green carpets, which do not inhibit the growth of the *Cypripedium* shoots.

The most wanted *Cypripedium* hybrids are:

Cypripedium Gisela and *Cypripedium Anna*:

Gisela and *Anna* are particularly robust hybrids and famous for their vigour. Even if you haven't had any experiences with lady's slippers in your garden, they will please you a lot. Within a few years they will form big clumps, 30-45 cm high. Regular fertilizing is required for vigorous growth. Just fertilize as you would with other perennials. The striking flowers open in mid-May and will enrich the garden with exclusive beauty. No need for winter protection: even when exposed to -30°C and only a thin snow cover *Gisela* and *Anna* will not be harmed.

Below: *Cypripedium Gisela*



Above: *Cypripedium Emil*

Cypripedium Emil and *Cypripedium Hank Small*:

Emil and *Hank Small* resemble the European lady's slipper (*Cyp. calceolus*) and the North American yellow lady's slipper (*Cyp. parviflorum*) but are much easier to grow in the garden. For example, five single-shoot rhizomes of *Cypripedium Emil* produced 23 flowering shoots with four double blossoms after only three years – in a normal garden without special care! These hybrids are a bit more dainty than *Gisela* and grow to about 35-50 cm. The intensely coloured flowers open in mid-May. Strong plants occasionally grow two blooms on one stem. Also no need for winter protection: *Emil* and *Hank Small* are absolutely hardy.

Michael Weinert has registered a trade mark so that one can recognise Frosch® *Cypripedium* hybrids when shopping from plant catalogues. Why? The hybrid *Gisela*, for example, may be propagated by everybody, whereas *Gisela* (Frosch®) is bound to come from his nursery. After the plants have been raised from seed there are stronger and weaker, more and less beautiful specimens. Under this mark only good plants are sold; "average" rhizomes do not receive this sign of quality. Michael explains: "We want to satisfy high demands and guarantee success and delight with the garden orchids. Interested hobby gardeners should therefore pay attention to the logo and the trade mark Frosch® when shopping. Both can be found in the catalogue of the relevant nurseries."



Above: *Cypripedium Hank Small*

Sources of supply:

The following German mail order nursery also delivers abroad and has the widest range of Frosch® hybrids for sale:

All-Orch-Ideen Andrea Wolf, Oberguenzburg, Germany
Tel. +49 8306 975229, Fax +49 8306 201
Email: info@all-orch-ideen.de
Online shop (in English):
www.all-orch-ideen.de/index.php5?lang=GBR

As the *Cypripedium* hybrids are shipped by mail, the distance is irrelevant.

