

Flower Power

Gentle and exotic, the Peruvian Inca Orchid has warmed hearts and homes for centuries.

By Cherie Langlois

Each evening, 12-year-old Summer begins the night by sleeping comfortably on top of owner Debbie Morris' bed. Later on, however, she insists on snuggling beneath the covers as the bedroom cools, and who can blame her? Summer is a hairless Peruvian Inca Orchid – and yes, that's a dog.

"If you don't wake up, she stands over you and taps you on the head with her paw," laughs Morris, a Peruvian breeder in Illinois, and secretary of the Peruvian Inca Orchid Club of America. "She'll keep tapping until you wake up enough to realize she needs the covers lifted up so she can get underneath!"

You may think Summer sounds spoiled, but she's actually performing the same important job that her canine predecessors did about 2,000 years ago. The Pre-Inca and Inca peoples of Peru treasured these medium-sized dogs as bed-heating home companions because the animals' hairlessness made them feel warmer to the touch. "We call them 25-pound hot water bottles," Morris says.

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