

Collectors Corner Fact Sheet

Living Stones — Lithops



Living stones (Lithops) belong to the mesembryanthemum family and is the most extreme member of the group. Lithops have evolved to survive climates so harsh that very few other plants are able to survive. Lithops come from arid areas that receive almost no water and can survive a year or more without rain fall. The plant is located mostly below ground with only the tip of the leaf exposed. Each leaf which is highly succulent has windows that allow light to enter and photosynthesis occurs inside the leaf.

Light—Lithops must have direct sunlight otherwise the plant will stretch and eventually die. The sun will help the plant remain tight and compact.

Temperature—Lithops prefer full exposure where nights get cool to cold and days can be hot. Winter cold is needed for the end of the growth cycle when leaf shed and division occurs. Over winter they should not be watered.

Watering—Lithops can survive on 1 or 2 watering's a year. When watered the plant must dry out very fast, if they remain wet for too long they will drink too much and crack or eventually rot. Monthly in summer and no water from mid Autumn to Mid Spring is all that is required, a plant can tell you if it needs water by the hardness of the leaf, if it is firm it is happy. In autumn leaf shed will occur and the outer leaf will become soft, all watering should cease until next Spring. If any water is given to the plant it will be unable to shed the old leaves, in nature the plant takes all its water from the old leaves to promote the new growth.. With Lithops a simple rule applies, when in doubt do not water. If drying out the pot takes too long then do not soak the pot, only give it enough water to penetrate half way. Water on warmer days so pot will dry in one to two days.

Location—Lithops must be grown in direct sunlight, a sunny window indoors which receives direct sunlight or a sheltered outdoor area will do well. If the plant grows tall it is too dark. Outdoors it must be out of the rain and in a dry position. In window sills check the temperature in summer, if you can fry an



egg the plant may also suffer. Lithops must be kept dry in winter so avoid any areas that may get wet.

Repotting—Lithops rarely need Repotting as they can stay in small pots for many years. Fertilising is rarely required, a small amount once a year generally in Spring is best. A Lithop can be grown fast and get large but it will most likely die in a few months as they become too soft.

Pests and Diseases – Lithops have no pests but can easily die if over watered or kept too wet. If rot occurs on older plants or plants nearby it is advisable to treat all the plants around it. Benlate has proven the most effective but other fungicides will also help.

When in doubt do not water

If its growing do not water

If new leaves appear stop watering until late Spring

After flowering do not water for 4 to 6 months

Lithops have many cousins that survive in similar conditions The following genera can be treated similarly. Pleispilos, Fenestraria, Conophytum, Argyroderma, Titanopsis, Faucaria, Cheiridopsis, Aloinopsis, Dinteranthus and Lapidaria. Some of these can take more water than a Lithops and some Faucaria's can be grown as garden plants.

Good Growing!

Collectors Corner, Gardenworld

810 Springvale Rd, Braeside, Ph: 9798 5845

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