fertilizers. variety of brands can be used, but those with a high nitrogen content and full micronutrients give the best results. (usually diluted to 1/4 normal concentration) can be applied directly to the soil once monthly to mature, actively-growing plants. plants or slow-growing species (especially highlanders) should be given a more dilute solution and/or at less frequent intervals.

Pitcher Health: Large healthy plants with flushes of colourful pitchers are the pride and joy of any Nepenthes collection. production is a good indication of general plant health; plants which are unhealthy or are kept in non-ideal conditions will often fail to produce pitchers. in healthy plants, each leaf does not necessarily produce a pitcher, and some species appear to produce pitchers only in intermittent flushes. formation can be encouraged by good lighting and high humidity. some species, upper pitchers are more regularly produced on tendrils which have actively coiled around an object.

Though there is some evidence to indicate that water-stressed plants are capable of reabsorbing moisture from their pitchers, severely dehydrated plants may drop their pitchers suddenly. Nepenthes pitchers will secrete their own fluid, and it is usually unnecessary to add water to them as this may dilute the contents and render them ineffective for digestion. can be made for those species with reclining lids such as N. ampullaria and N. lowii, or if the pitcher contents have been accidentally spilled.

Depending upon the species, individual pitchers may last anywhere from 3 to 12 months. pitchers will usually brown in their top half first, and they can remain in this half-withered state for several months. are still beneficial for the plant and should not be trimmed until they have completely browned.

Good Growing

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Collectors Corner

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Nepenthes

Care Instructions

Nepenthes are a Genus of Tropical and sub tropical Insect Eating Plants that grow as a creeper and produce amazing insect catching traps on the end of each leaf tip. A number of species come from high altitudes and can be grow very well in colder climates like Melbourne with minimal care.

Houseplants: increasing number of plant collectors have been finding that, with proper care, many Nepenthes may be grown as houseplants on sunny windowsills. addition to catching a few annoying houseflies, a healthy plant with pitchers makes a fascinating addition to the windowsill garden. species of Nepenthes which can tolerate relatively dry air and temperature fluctuations seem to perform best indoors. candidates include: N. alata (highland spotted form), N. khasiana, N. maxima, N. tobaica, N. ventricosa, and various hybrids. is very important to insure that plants grown indoors receive adequate light and humidity. should only be kept on bright windowsills which receive a minimum of 3 hours direct sun each day. humidity can be provided by frequent spraying with pure water.

Outdoors: upon local climate conditions, Nepenthes can make suitable plants for the patio or outdoor garden seasonally or year-round. In temperate areas which receive regular cool/foggy weather (often coastal), some highland species can be grown. has been achieved with N. ventricosa, N. alata, N. khasiana, and others. plants should be kept in a moderately sheltered (50% shaded) area, sprayed frequently, and protected from frost, this is easily achieved by keeping the plant under cover. in tropical climates can cultivate lowland Nepenthes species outdoors year-round.

Containers: Nepenthes can be grown in a variety of containers, but plastic pots are generally preferred because they are economical, lightweight, and come in a great range of sizes. Nepenthes will do well in a one-gallon

pot, but some of the larger species (N. bicalcarata, N. merrilliana, N. sumatrana, others) require containers of 4-5 gallons to reach full size. and young plants can be grown in 4-6 inch pots or trays. pots, though attractive, are avoided by many growers due to the belief that they accumulate harmful salts and chemicals. , experience shows that healthy Nepenthes can be grown for many years in clay pots, especially if they are given high-qualtiy pure water. should always have sufficient holes to permit rapid drainage and good soil aeration. baskets and pots are an excellent way to display larger specimens, and allows for the trailing vines and tendrils to grow without support.

Potting Mix: In the wild Nepenthes grow on a wide range of substrates ranging from clay soil to mossy tree trunks. , it is usually not necessary to duplicate these conditions in cultivation and a single general compost will suffice for most species with few variations. suitable potting media for Nepenthes should be well-drained, slightly acidic, and poor in nutrients. growers prefer to mix their own, and a simple well-balanced recipe can be made by mixing equal parts of organic and inorganic ingredients. used organic materials sphagnum moss, sphagnum peat, tree bark, and osmunda or tree fern root fibre. provide some moisture whilst being low in pH and relatively nutrient-free. Inorganic materials such as pumice, perlite, sand, granite chips, and clay pellets help to increase drainage and soil aeration, which is an important factor in the growth of healthy Nepenthes roots. addition of one part charcoal chips assists in aeration and may aid in preventing stagnant media.

Most species of Nepenthes require a minimum of 3-4 hours of direct sunlight per day or about 30-50% greenhouse shade cloth (depending upon local climate). lighting will not only enhance the growth of most species, but it will also bring out full coloration in the pitchers and help to stimulate flowering. lighting is a common problem when growing Nepenthes, symptoms include large floppy leaves and/or failure to produce pitchers. few species, such as N. ampullaria, N. bicalcarata, N. hirsuta, N. macfarlanei, N. rafflesiana, and others, prefer somewhat shadier conditions.

Being wholly tropical plants, sufficient humidity is a key factor in the health of Nepenthes foliage. it is recommended to maintain the humidity at a minimum of 70%, which can be accomplished in non-tropical climates by frequent misting or growing the plants in a greenhouse or terrarium. species with thick waxy leaves are able to tolerate somewhat drier air - these make good candidates for windowsill growing (see below). with thin delicate leaves (N. hamata, N. tentaculata, N. muluensis, etc.) are very susceptible to humidity fluctuations.

Temperature; The genus is generally divided into two sections, lowland and highland species, according to their altitude of origin and different climatic preferences.

Watering: Nepenthes appreciate frequent watering and the soil should never be allowed to become dry. can be done on a daily basis (in warm temperatures), or once every 2-3 days during winter. should never be left in standing water as this will quickly suffocate the roots. , pure water should be used whenever possible (reverse osmosis, distilled, or rainwater are ideal) as the excess dissolved minerals frequently found in tap water can accumulate in the soil and cause damage to the sensitive roots.

Fertiliser: n the wild, Nepenthes are able to thrive in nutrient-poor soil largely because they are capable of supplementing their diet with insect prey. it has been shown that plants in cultivation can survive for many years without "eating", growth can be greatly enhanced by regular feeding. some situations, such as outdoors or in the greenhouse, the plants may capture a sufficient number of insects on their own. growers prefer to feed insects to the pitchers by hand; in this case frozen crickets or mealworms (available at pet food stores) are often used. should be taken to avoid an excess amount of prey in the pitchers, as this can lead to bad odours and death of the pitcher. a few insects per pitcher is sufficient. such as meat and eggs can lead to rot.

As an alternative to feeding with insects, Nepenthes may be given artificial