

SARRACENIA IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

by Steve Clemesha

Here in Sydney we are fortunate enough to be able to grow the genus Sarracenia out of doors and also to be able to water them with tap water as our tap water lacks minerals which kill Sphagnum and other acid loving plants. My plants all grow in plastic pots of peat and/or Sphagnum and these stand in water saucers. They do best in open sunny position. I once grew them in a sunny place where tree branches hung over them even if some were 40 feet high. A type of grub which bores into the trees used to fall from these and bore into Sarracenia rhizomes and buds, often nearly killing a plant. This problem ended when plants were moved to an open position.

There is no local source of the plants so all must be imported from the U.S.A. This can be done either as seed or plants. As plants are set back about a year and have to spend three months in a quarantine nursery, seed is preferable where there is a choice, especially as in this genus as the seed holds its viability for about two years.

I raised plants of Darlingtonia from seed to flowering in four years. I then foolishly put the plants in a specially prepared bed where they died. As mature imported plants failed to survive reversing of seasons there was nothing else to do than to start again from seed. This I am doing now and shall be much less hasty to experiment with this species. It seems to require full open sun right from the start and is best in peat when small because sphagnum moss tends to overgrow it. When it grows larger, it can be topped with sphagnum. I have given numerous plants of it away, and no one has succeeded with it who has given it shade.

S. purpurea is the first species of the genus I tried to grow and it is by far the most difficult. Mature plants I attempted to import failed and all others have been raised from seed. For the first two years when the plants produce narrow juvenile pitchers, they are trouble free. When mature pitchers appear in the third season, they continue well. It is in the fourth season that is their "Waterloo." In periods of dry wind or heat which do not harm hybrids or other species, one will find one or more pitchers have dried or collapsed. This continues until the weakened plant rots. Southern forms are no more resistant than northern forms. The problem even affects the hybrid S. x catesbei but to a much lesser degree and only in rare extremes of heat. This summer I will place four sticks around the pot and over these I will put a polyethylene bag with the top cut out. The plant is then in a more humid and wind-free atmosphere. This method works with some Droseras which seem wind sensitive. I may need to give the plants more shade to compensate for the extra heat in the bag. S. psittacina responded very well to this treatment. Use of the bag has stopped pitcher die-back and more vigorous growth has resulted. This year the pitchers have survived the winter in full beauty and for the first time I have a plant in bloom.

S. minor is another one I had trouble with as my first plant of it rotted. Don Schnell advised to give as much sun as possible for this plant and with this I agree. I also make sure that the rear end of the rhizome is cut off clean and through live "wood." In potting the plant I make a little hill in the center. I have the rhizome sitting on top of this with the scar exposed to the sun. This way the plant grows well and without trouble and this year for the first time one will flower.

S. rubra--I have four clones of this species including one of forma jonesii from Etowah, North Carolina. These now grow easily and well but grow only in much sunlight or else rot will break out on the underside of the rhizome in shade.

S. flava is a species I grow easily and without a problem though I have yet to see a flower on it. I suspect I was not giving it sufficient sun. Under my conditions it does not produce a red patch under the hood or any flat leaves in late summer and autumn.

S. alata is very easy and flowers each year. One clone I have has a tendency to form more leaf blade than the other. The less "leafy" one may be a hybrid but now it is in bud, so soon I will know.

Both S. oreophila and leucophylla also grow easily, but the former plant does not produce off-sets, or flowers in the shade.

SPECIAL NOTICES

We have received many queries for back issues of CPN and regret that our supply is exhausted. We print just enough issues to cover current subscribers plus a fair estimate of new subscribers who may come along during the course of a volume so they can receive a complete volume if at all possible. We realize that there may be losses of one or more issues that people will wish to replace and in these instances we will Xerox copies from our personal issues at cost which runs about 5¢ per page. We do not plan reprinting CPN's as such, but after Volume V or so is complete, we would like to make up a series of booklets covering all of the pertinent material in the previous five years of CPN. There would be one booklet per genus (sometimes