

CULTIVATING CEPHALOTUS FOLLICULARIS

by David Kutt

My own experience with cultivating Cephalotus is confined to the past two and one-half years. During that time I have grown plants from rhizome portions and leaf cuttings with relative success regarding size and plant vigor.

My introduction to cultivating this plant came in early 1973 when several small rhizome portions were given to me by a friend. At that time, living sphagnum (his growing medium) was difficult to obtain in Ohio, so I used more easily obtainable dried fiber sphagnum. The plants did grow in this material, but although no loss of plants occurred, overall growth and development was very slow. The plants were treated basically the same as Sarracenia except for humidity which was kept higher at 75 to 85%, and more frequent misting. They were allowed to cool down to 45° or 50° F. in winter and even froze once or twice with no apparent harm to foliage or root systems. During winter, the lower temperatures accompanied by a shorter natural photoperiod caused production of the characteristic "winter leaves."

In the spring of 1974 the plants were carefully transplanted with all roots intact from their individual clay pots to a larger single tray of more shallow depth. This time they were planted in living sphagnum moss with better results evident later. I noticed when transplanting them that most of the plants had produced runners which were trying to work their way up the sides of the deep six-inch clay pots. As hoped, after transplanting them into the 2 1/2 inch deep tray, the new offshoots broke the surface much more readily. Then, rather than the plants' vigor being spent climbing the walls of deep pots, it was used to spread new vegetation across the surface of the tray.

The past year has seen equally good growth of Cephalotus utilizing unfertilized German peat as a medium rather than living sphagnum. I am not, however, out to make statements about superiority of either medium over the other. I have seen large, healthy plants growing in both materials. Interestingly, beginning in November of 1974, I began testing the effects of light fertilization on some of the plants. Initial feeding efforts of a year ago involved the use of fish emulsion (50% normal dilution) as the nutritive element in misting, watering, and pitcher feeding (once every two weeks). Although plant size began increasing, after four months the use of fish emulsion was discontinued due to its tendency to eventually "spoil" the potting medium even though containers were drained. I am now more successfully using an inorganic fertilizer produced by "Plantabbs". "Hy-grow", an orchid fertilizer has been producing larger pitchers and foliage as well as increasing the speed of development. I use this product at 3/4 normal strength on foliage and in the planting medium, and 1/2 strength in the pitchers. Care should be taken when putting nutrients directly in the pitchers since Cephalotus pitchers will rot off when too strong a dilution is used in them. The plants are fed once a month during their active growth cycle. Regular watering flushes the drained containers in the time intervals between feedings. Although living sphagnum tends to die easily with the addition of minerals and nutrients, the German peat usually just forms its own moss across the surface, preventing "watering splash" of potting material later.

Cephalotus light requirements are more similar to those of Nepenthes than Sarracenia in that they seem to prefer a more diffused type of light. As a general rule concerning pitcher size, more shade produces larger but less colorful pitchers. One can grow Cephalotus in a 50-60% shaded environment, then after several pitchers have developed, light can be slowly increased to "color-up" the foliage.

Although artificial nutrition may not be necessary for good growth, my own experience with cultivated plants here indicates that larger, more vigorous plants are produced by feeding. This comparison is made with non-fed plants grown in living sphagnum or German peat. Present plants here show one and one-half inch pitchers.

ON GROWING THE AUSTRALIAN PITCHER PLANT CEPHALOTUS

by J. A. Mazrimas

A single cluster or rosette of Cephalotus is a rather small plant in comparison to the pitcher plants of North America (Sarracenia) or Asia (Nepenthes). However, like some Sarracenia species, this plant produces two types of leaves--a flat, ovate-shaped one usually found in the center of the plant, and a small pitcher which grows at the end of a long stem which appears on the outer margins of the rosette. The flat leaves are usually produced at cool temperatures (around 50° F.) and short daylength while the pitchers are produced in warmer temperatures (around 75° F.) in the summertime.

In the field, Cephalotus grows on peaty soils that are constantly wet with seepage from above but is mostly found a few yards away from open water and definitely above the water table. In addition, the plants are virtually covered with an overstory of tall grasses and sedges which protects the plant from the hot, searing sunlight. These facts, then, give us some clue to how to cultivate the plant in our greenhouses or terrariums with a minimum of problems.