SEEKING THE PYGMY DROSERAS

by Steve Rose

Many of the plants that I will describe are new species and forms and have yet to be named by botanists. I have seen these plants growing in their native locations and so flower colors and locations will have to suffice as means of identification. It's rather confusing, but it's the only way to identify the plants so far. Locations are in quotes.

"TOODYAY" PINK. This plant grows in heavy ground silt, a sandy clay and rarely in sand with wetter ground than for *D. miniata* and *D. platystigma*. The flower color in 4 locations is much the same but color intensity changes as well as a very slight stipule shape. It likes to grow in open areas between bushes that have roots in moist ground all year. It is late to go dormant and I have seen it in a sandy swamp with "MUCHEA" pink (see below) and *D. nitidula*. I grow it in sand and peat mix, and it grows easy and flowers well. I can even keep it in water all the time, and it grows even in summer. It goes dormant after flowering as with most pygmy *Droseras*.

D. platystigma (common). This is an easy and best variety of plant that grows in heavy gravel country with dry summers and late dormancy. It's never found in wet ground like the Albany variety, but I grow it in a sandy-peat mix or light gravel and peat. I stand it in water all summer.

D. miniata. This is a common and easy plant to grow in sand-peat mix. It dries out in summer and has a late dormancy. I stand it in water in summer, and it seems to grow alright. It naturally grows near or with *D. platystigma* and produces gemmae very well.

The "MT. MANYPEAK" type. A robust species that grows quite large in heavy gravel where it is very windy and dry. The leaves, nevertheless, remain sticky which is amazing considering the conditions. It has large purple-pink flowers and a late dormancy and prefers to grow in dry, rough conditions rather than in sand. This plant is similar to *D. drummondi* and seems to be part of a group of 2-3 species and related to a few from Albany and 1 or 2 from Gidgegannup. The plants grow tall and send out aerial roots. I grow in washed gravel on the surface and a sandy peat mix underneath. I found some down in Albany with gemmae buds in summer which is 4-5 months out of season, but they grew well after rooting and take about 6-8 weeks to establish.

D. nitidula. This is a highly unusual robust and giant type of the species with the possibility of it being a new species. It grows in the Cannington swamps and I grow it in a peat-sand mix and allow it to stand in water in summer. It takes similar conditions as the common *D. nitidula* and *D. pulchella*.

Big *D. leucoblasta* is the most unusual and beautiful because of its brilliant metallic orange flower with a dark brown center. Another form has an even larger flower which is bright yellow and may be a new species. It is easy to lose because of rot, and I have much difficulty establishing them. It grows in sandy conditions unlike other forms and is late to go dormant. Although the ground is dry in summer, I prefer to keep them damp and shaded, and some seem to survive. Gemmae derived plants will be easier as they can become conditioned much more easily. Again, I use a layer of washed sand on the surface and a sand-peat below.

(Ed. I use Benlate spray on all pygmy *Droseras* before planting them and follow this procedure up with another spray over the plants and medium about 7-10 days later. As a result, I have cut down on the number of plants which succumb to rotting by a considerable amount. J.A.M.)

D. pycnoblasta is a pygmy plant that grows in deep sand in a desert with semi-arid conditions. It produces a large dormancy bud and sometimes grows with big *D. leucoblasta* and other forms. Although the plant rots easily in cultivation probably because it can't adjust readily to summer watering which is necessary to survival in pots, I manage to grow some in the sand on the surface and sand-peat mixture underneath method, but one needs some luck in growing it.

"MUCHEA" PINK species from Seven Mile swamp Gingin is a fairly easy one with pink flowers and has a very late dormancy or not at all in some locations. It's a golden green plant that seems easy to grow in just a sand-peat mixture.

D. leucoblasta. This is the common type which is very variable under all different conditions. I found this species growing dry in loam, sand, clay and gravel. It has an early dormancy and its flower is plain orange or a bright orange-red color. Some forms even have very pale flowers (Wongan Hills) but all seem to have the same consistent stipule shape. The extreme forms differ in stipule shape. I find this one hard to cultivate, especially with some forms, but others grow with 50% survivors. I have some in plain dark peat moss in water, and they grow alright, while others are dormant out of water and remain so regardless of watering but remain green. A change in temperature may induce awareness.

Variable *D. platystigma* from Chittering may be a new species and grows quite easily in heavy gravel--an ironstone gravel. It is cultivated easily, and I keep mine standing in water in a sand-peat mix.

YELLOW-FLOWERED *DROSERA* from Regans Ford (Gingin). This plant was found four years ago and remains unnamed today, but it grows in deep yellow-white sand sometimes with *D. paleacea* nearby but never together. It has an early dormancy and sports a nice pale-bright yellow flower. I grow it in washed sand surface by pressing the buds into the sand, and it's kept moist, not wet. I lost 80% of my original collection, but it was made at the wrong time.

EXTRA LARGE "MUCHEA" PINK. This plant grows in peat moss in shade and grows very robust in only one small location by a spring in thick bush. It does not like hot, sunny conditions but flowers very well showing large flowers on multiple stalks (about 4-6). I grow mine on sawdust in 3" pots that sit in water, and the leaves stay sticky and may go dormant but should not go altogether.

LAKE "BADGEBUP" WHITE FLOWER. A new species that's easy to grow which grows along with *D. nitidula* by the lake's shores in sand the little black peat. It's also associated with *D. pulchella* and seems to look like a hybrid of *D. nitidula* and *D. occidentalis*, but I cannot find *D. occidentalis* in the area as yet. It's easy to grow in sand-peat mix and does not seem to grow so well in straight peat. The pot is stood in water in summer. The single white flower have an unusual blood-red clubbed stigma which is very uncommon in this kind of *D. occidentalis* group which has about 3-4 new species in addition to the old ones.

"BANNISTER" PALE PINK. A very new species also easy to grow in most conditions even in pine leaf mold on the edge of a pine forest by the road's side. Found in fairly damp creek sides, wet hollows and some remain growing all year as others go dormant. Mine stand in peat-sand mix in water. Plants get a deep red with nice pink flowers with strange stigmas that look boat-shaped.

"WALYINGA" PINK. These plants like the dry conditions of *D. playtstigma* but will also grow in sand. Mine have all gone dormant except 2-3 gemmae forming plantlets late in season. It needs a dry summer and grows a nice metallic pink flower which leads me to believe it's a new species. I use a sand-peat mix, but it doesn't respond favorably, and many are lost.

ORANGE FLOWER--"BROOKTON". It may be *D. leucoblasta* but the main difference is that it is underwater some time of the year. This one grows in a sand pit in deep white quartz sand with *D. zonaria* and *D. miniata* as well as in wetter places with *D. nitidula*. If it is *D. leucoblasta*, then it is the only form so far which will cultivate readily standing in or out of water or in a variety of mixtures. I use a sand-peat mix and do not stand in water until established.

D. scorpoides. Found in Albany and grow as *D. nitidula* in peat moss and sand mix or chopped sphagnum. Plant them deep but leave the plant above the surface and plant will find its height of growth according to moss growth. Grow in light shade and needs patience to establish.

SMALL PINK--"NORTH BEERMULLAH". This new species is part of the *D. occidentalis* group. The best plants are grown in peat moss and/or sand/peat mix standing in water and part shade. Too much sun will lead to dehydration, especially in W. A. This species flowers freely and has a small, single pink flower.

D. pulchella--ORANGE FLOWER. This species is the same as the ordinary one but differs in flower color. There are now four color forms of this species: dark pink, pale pink, apricot and orange.

D. androsacea. This unusual species grows in many areas and conditions of soil, but it does best in sandy loam, so use a sand/peat mix for cultivation. It has an early dormancy, and it's hard to keep growing, but gemmae plants may stay sticky longer and may not go completely dormant. It's found associated with *D. nyenoblasta* and *D. leucoblasta*.

SOME GENERAL NOTES ON PYGMIES

by Steve Rose

When trying to establish the pygmy *Droseras* in your collection, there are several do's and don'ts. First, don't allow the plants to dry out at all and never give them too much sun. Second, never let them stand in water unless they are the swamp kinds like *D. pulchella*, *D. occidentalis*, white flower "Lake Badgebup," small pink "North Beermullah" and *D. nitidula*. Also pink flower "North Bannister" and extra large "Muchea" pink can stand in water. Third, never water with a heavy spray or hose since sand can splash onto the leaves of the young plants and over-stimulate the leaves with loss of overall power of the plant trying to digest the sand as well as peat moss. I use a syringe and water between the plants and NOT on top of them.