

DARLINGTONIA

by Jim Miller (2319 Ninth St., Green Bay, WI 54304)

Many people, myself included, have expressed frustration at the difficulties of growing *Darlingtonia*. Having grown these plants in Tallahassee where daytime temps may reach over a hundred degrees, I am quite familiar with the methods necessary to keeping them healthy.

First, the best way to grow this plant in warm climates is to keep it in a fairly shady location. That means no direct sunlight during the hottest summer months. I have grown them indoors beside an east facing window (getting only an hour of early morning sun) as well as in my greenhouse under the lowest bench. Indoors, the plant should be misted twice a day with refrigerated distilled water and watered with the same only when the growing medium begins to feel dry. At least twice a month the plant should be taken outdoors and dunked in a pail of cold, pure water. This flushes the root system and washes out any accumulated salts. The dunking should be done three or four times by submerging the plant, pulling it out of the water and allowing the water to drain through the pot before repeating the process. This procedure should also be used each week or so on plants grown outdoors. The healthiest growth seems to come when the plants are grown in live sphagnum as this seems to keep roots cooler. The outdoor plants may be grown slightly wetter than the indoor ones but in both instances good drainage is vital.

My latest method of cultivation is even more successful. I am growing the plants indoors in a small basement greenhouse under artificial light (2 four foot grow-lux / 2 cool white). I use the same methods described above, but in the basement temps rarely get over 65° F. The plants have pitchers over 18" and they are beautifully veined maroon. The hoods also are fuller and the "tongues" are large and well-developed with deep red venation.

This also brings up a point. Many people

feel that the red coloration in carnivorous plants is due to intense sunlight. This is not always the case. I have found all my *Dionaea* to be brighter red in the traps under fluorescent light. All my *Darlingtonia* and several *Pinguiculas* are redder under the lights. This is perhaps due in part to the ultra-violet light from the grow-lux lamps, but it also seems the temperatures play a role here.

I have seen *Dionaea* grown by Bob Hanrahan at the World Insectivorous Plant facility at Arroyo Grande, California with a beautiful dark red color in the traps. These plants were grown in moderate shade in the multi-level growth area so they received little, if any direct sunlight. Arroyo Grande though, has very cool temperatures year-round. In August, when I visited WIP the temps were only in the sixties during the day. So it seems that in some way these two elements affect the plants to produce the color changes. And again, it points out how much more we need to study them in order to understand all the factors involved in successful growth.

(WIP has moved. See March, 1980 CPN source list.)

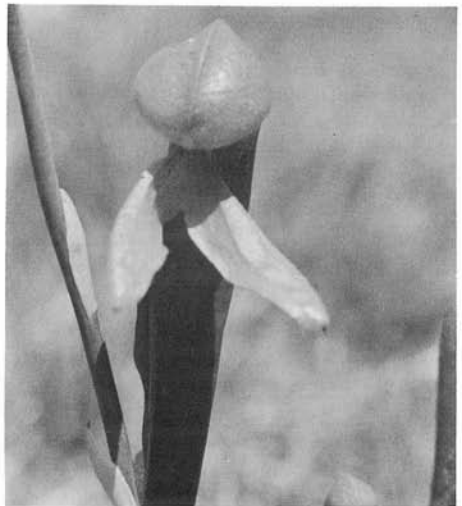


Photo by Kim Lynch