

Horticulturists' Corner

by Larry Mellenchamp

I have been asked several times how to handle a newly received collection of CP's which have come "bare root" from the grower. Normally, you would treat them as you would other types of plants which have been received through the mail or UPS. First, unwrap each plant CAREFULLY and look for broken roots, stems or leaves. Use a sharp razor blade to cut away carefully any damaged parts; if not removed, they will rot soon and mess up the growing medium. If the main stem has been broken, you may be able to root the larger, upper portion if it is a drosera. You may also go ahead and plant the lower stem with the roots still intact and see if it will send up new growth. Some CP's have thick, black, brittle roots, like *Drosera capensis*, *D. binata*, and *Cephalotus* (depending on the age); new plants will grow from just these pieces of root if they are long enough (one or two inches have worked for me).

After you have examined each plant, removed damaged parts, and laid out each plant separately, you are ready to pot them up. All of this should be done in a cool, shady place if possible; certainly these delicate plants that have been wrapped up inside a dark box for several days would be shocked by hot, dry air and very bright sunlight; they can be damaged by such conditions. You may need a spray-bottle of water — maybe with a little fungicide — to dampen down the areas to add humidity if the air is very dry. Be careful not to soak the plants or you increase the chances of fungus rot. There is a fine line of optimal humidity that is appropriate for newly planted plants; they like to "rest" in a subdued environment for a few days while they recover from the shock of their trip. Keep it cool, shady, and relatively humid.

Have your potting medium ready. You can use moist peat moss or sphagnum,

mixtures of peat and sand or peat and perlite, or whatever you like for the specimens you are growing. I really can't think of any CP's that would not get off to a good start in plain shredded sphagnum or a mixture of ground peat and perlite (except the aquatic ones, or calcium-loving types, of course). Certainly droseras, utricularias, sarracenias, nepenthes and cephalotus can go directly into whole long-fiber sphagnum that has been shredded a little by hand to make some of the pieces smaller and soaked in lukewarm water, with the excess squeezed out. This medium is lightweight, well aerated, and holds just enough water. Put each plant into the smallest container that it will fit in without cramping the roots. Too large a container can lead to overwatering; too small can lead to crowding the roots and stunted growth (though that will take a while). It would be better to use a container that is a little too small than one that is too large. Try and gently get the roots in the medium — I wrap a little sphagnum around the roots to make a ball, and then gently push the root ball into the pot, letting it conform to the shape of the pot. The new, healthy leaves should be above the medium, perhaps lying on the surface for droseras. Sarracenias should have the tips of their leaf bases, or new leaves, just coming out of the sphagnum moss. If necessary, trim a few lower leaves from the drosera which have a lot of leaves and then place the roots and a little bit of the lower stem into the sphagnum as described above. Use an instrument such as an old pencil, stick, knife, or straw to dig a small hole in the moss; help position the roots; and then cover back the medium. This keeps your big fat fingers from squeezing the tiny plants in your nervous zeal to plant it right the first time. Usually the plant will recover from

transplanting if they are not crushed, broken, or bruised. They are quick to grow new roots, especially the easy *droseras*, if the humidity is kept up and the air is not too hot. (Don't put them too near grow-lights, for example.)

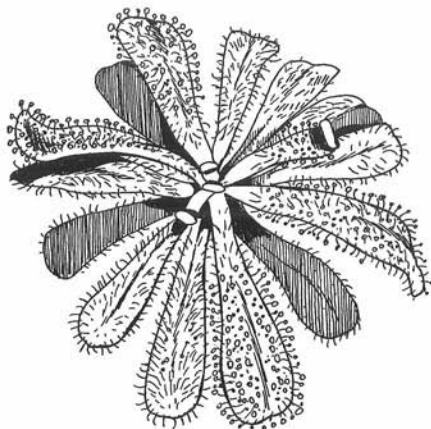
After transplanting, leave the plants alone for a few days; try and not even look at them. You may be surprised after a few days that they begin to perk up a bit and even grow a leaf or two. If nothing seems to be happening after a short time (say, two weeks), then something may be wrong. They probably would have rotted by then if they were going to. If they are still dormant when transplanted, then of course you will have to wait a while until they warm up, or the days get longer, before new signs of growth resume. Winter may be the best time to plant many species, especially *droseras*, while they are dormant. However, I have read and think it would be true that it is best to transplant anything (especially *sarracenias*) during their active growing season, so that they will have the proper conditions to recover quickly from the transplant shock which inevitably happens in forms such as broken roots and bruised leaves. I have found this to be true when separating plants also.

Clumps of *droseras* or branching *sarracenia* rhizomes may be separated and the new individuals potted separately to increase the size of your collection or to provide material for trading and selling. This should be done during the active growing season, but I have done it during the early spring while *sarracenias* are still dormant without mishap. It is wise to treat the newly cut surfaces with fungicide and to use a very sharp razor blade to make the cuts to prevent infection. Never tear plants apart: you might tear the wrong parts. Make good, clean cuts where you want them. You will have to observe the specimens you wish to divide to determine whether there is sufficient material to separate. Try and make sure both new pieces have some roots and active

growth on them. Flytraps should have begun to form separate growing points with their own root system; *sarracenias* should have well separated growing points with their own roots; and *drosera* should be large enough to have sufficient stem to handle the separated pieces. *Drosera* usually form new roots more quickly if there were none already present, if you keep the young tender plantlets from drying out while they recover and begin growing.

For plantlets which have been produced from leaf cuttings of *drosera*, Venus' flytrap, or *pinguicula*, it is important to wait until the tiny plantlets have fully rooted before cutting them away from their "leaf." In fact, it would be better to wait until they are quite large and have very well developed root systems. On *Drosera filiformis*, for example, I have obtained sprouts from one-inch leaf cuttings on a sphagnum surface in 6 weeks, but I would wait another four to six weeks before separating the plantlets. For situations like this, you can experiment with different techniques since you can always grow some more plantlets from another leaf if the first set doesn't make it. You learn best from experience!

(Please see HORT. CORNER p. 26)



D. Hamiltonii
by Jim Miller

Summary:

1. Work in a cool, shady place. Have medium ready.
2. Remove damaged parts of newly received (or divided) plants.
3. Use a pot just the right size.
4. Place moss around the roots, then put them into the pot; OR make a hole in the medium, place the roots in, spreading them out if possible, cover, and water to settle.
5. Plant so that new leaves are above the medium (sarracenia), or so that lowest leaves are lying on top of medium; remove some leaves if necessary (drosera).
6. Keep under medium humid conditions the first week.
7. Divide plants by cutting with a sharp razor blade.
8. Treat cut portions with fungicide.
9. Treat cuttings as above in repotting.
10. Divide during the growing season if possible.
11. Wait until new roots are present on new plantlets before dividing them.



Double pitcher of *S. alata* X *S. psittacina*

Photo by J.A. Mazrimas



Sarracenia purpurea
Drawing by Jim Miller