

Nepenthes and Rockwool

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Here in the botanical garden of the University of Gent, we are cultivating *Nepenthes* in rockwool. Because sphagnum moss is scarce and protected by law in Belgium and because a mix of orchid bark, perlite and peat gives no satisfaction, we decided to try rockwool with *Nepenthes* since good results are seen with orchids. We see that *Nepenthes* grow faster, have bigger pitchers and there is no stagnation of growth after repotting because the roots were not disturbed.

There are two sorts of horticultural rockwool, the wet and the dry type. The wet type can absorb 80% water and the dry type about 5% water. We use about a 50-50% mix. Its essential to use plastic pots with drainage holes because clay pots dry out too quickly. The rockwool becomes almost dry after evaporation, and once the mix has dried up completely, it is not possible to wet the mix again due to structural changes of the mix. So what do you do if you want to repot in rockwool? First, take your *Nepenthes* out of the compost and clean the roots underwater until no old compost is retained. You take a plastic pot and put some dry rockwool in the pot. Then you take the *Nepenthes* and set the roots in the pot and add the 50-50 rockwool mix. After filling the entire pot with mix, we push slightly until the plant does not move. The mix is watered with plenty of water.

Because there are no nutrients in rockwool, we use a fertilizer (20-20-20) and spray *Nepenthes* about every two weeks with it in the growing season and about once a month during winter. In winter, we prune back and take cuttings also using rockwool as mix. The cuttings are inserted about half the depth in this mix and we may spray them everyday to keep the humidity high. More than 90% of the cuttings strike and we leave them undisturbed until good growth is visible. Then we take the rooted cuttings out and pot them up. When repotting plants which are already in rockwool, you have the advantage that there is no stagnation in growth. At the bottom of the new pot some dry rockwool is added and then this is followed by the plant together with the old mix and filling the spaces with new mix. There is little or no root disturbance and the plant keeps on growing.

Here in the botanical garden, we keep *Nepenthes* in the greenhouse together with orchids and under no circumstances must the pots be allowed to stand in water. Everyday, we spray them and they reward us with beautiful pitchers, leaves and flower almost every year.

Want Ads

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FOR SALE: Durastill. A small used electric still with 5-gal reservoir (In excellent condition). \$800 new, asking \$250 plus shipping. Produces about 10-gal. a day.

Ernest Taniguchi (45-1040D Waialele Rd., Kaneohe, HI 96744-3153)

WANTED TO BUY: A copy of the out-of-print *Plants to Eat Animals* by J.H. Prince.

Erik Holzapple (105 Hollytree Lane, Simpsonville, SC 29681 USA, Tel. 803/967-7357)

TS: *D. stolonifera compacta* \$5.00; *D. burkeana* \$2.00; *P. primuliflora* \$2.00. WTB: *N. bicalcarata*; *N. rajah*, *D. schizandra*; any *Heliophora* species; *U. quelchii*, *S. rubra jonesii*, *B. gigantea*. Also a copy of CP of Australia by A. Lowrie, Vol. 1 or 2.