

DROSERA GRANTSАUI — A NEW INTRODUCTION FROM BRAZIL

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Keywords: cultivation: *Drosera grantsаui*.

My favorite carnivorous plant explorer/superhero Fernando Rivadavia generously provided the following background information on *Drosera grantsаui*:

I first found *Drosera grantsаui* at the Emas National Park in central Brazil in 1991. Over the following years I repeatedly stumbled across this species at numerous other localities in the states of Paraná, São Paulo, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais, Distrito Federal, Tocantins, and Bahia. This perennial is surprisingly widespread and common throughout eastern and central-western Brazil, ranging nearly 1500km in both a north-south and an east-west axis. It occurs mostly on sandstone highlands in open vegetation, between approximately 550-1550m elevation.

Drosera grantsаui is somewhat reminiscent of *D. scorpioides* or a diminutive *D. chrysolepis*, but has been traditionally misidentified as *D. communis*, since both are relatively small species, both often occur in the same habitats, and because both have elongated seeds. Inhabiting perennially humid to wet habitats such as seepages or along streams and small rivers, *Drosera grantsаui* may grow on sphagnum, in boggy humus-rich soil, and more rarely in humid rocky-sandy soil or humid lateritic soil. Depending on the habitat, the stems may be barely noticeable, or they may reach nearly 30cm in length. It is often sympatric with other species of *Drosera*, *Genlisea*, and *Utricularia*. It apparently has no definite flowering period and can be found in bloom year-round, the flowers varying in color from white to light-lilac or light-pink.

I received seed of *Drosera grantsаui* (from Serra da Canastra, Minas Gerais, Brazil) in the middle of 1999, with a warning that it is very short-lived. I had seen photos of this beautiful new species on Fernando Rivadavia's and Marcelo Fontana's fabulous web page (Fontana and Rivadavia-Lopes, 2001) and also in an article in Carnivorous Plant Newsletter, where it was featured as a front cover photograph (Rivadavia, 1992), so I knew it was special! Needless to say, I planted that seed the minute I received it! Seed was sown on "No Damp Off" (Mosser Lee's brand name for dead milled sphagnum moss) and placed in a baggie, off to the side of my fluorescent lights. I typically keep seed pots away from strong light to slow the growth of moss, algae and slime mold. However, since fungus seems to thrive under these lower light levels, I lightly mist seed pots with distilled water every few days. This inhibits the growth of fungus well.

After about a month or so, I had several seedlings. Once it was clear that I was not going to get much more germination, I moved these seedlings into a 40 liter (10 gallon) terrarium similar to the ones in which I grow all my other plants. This tank

was placed 4 cm (1.5 inches) under 40 watt fluorescent lights (2 cool white, 1 warm white and 1 plant and aquarium bulb) with a 11-13 hour photoperiod (which I adjust seasonally). The distance between the plants and lights was approximately 23 cm (9 inches). The bottom of the tank serves as a reservoir for distilled water and is allowed to dry out between waterings. A glass cover placed on top of the tank provides very high humidity.

Summer room temperatures range from 16-26°C (60-78°F) and winter temperatures range from 10-20°C (50-68°F). However, daytime temperatures inside the tanks get higher due to the heat generated by the lights above them.

The *Drosera grantsau* seedlings were slow growing at first. However, after about 18 months most of my plants began flowering. Two of the plants flowered so much they exhausted themselves—they died back for several months, but eventually grew back from the stems of each of the seemingly dead plants. Fresh seed of this species has a very high germination rate and I got a good crop of seedlings from these plants.

I have since learned that once they have passed their seedling stage, *Drosera grantsau* and most of the other South American *Drosera* I grow greatly prefer New Zealand sphagnum moss over the Mosser Lee “No Damp Off” mix. While use of the “No Damp Off” mix (or peat moss mixes, which most of my plants hate!) often results in redder plants, those growing in long fiber moss perform much better for me. It is no surprise that, since switching to New Zealand sphagnum, this new crop of seedlings is growing much faster than the first crop. (I have been very disappointed in commercially available American sphagnum moss, as it is often full of weeds and of much lower quality. Chilean sphagnum moss is better but still not as good as the more expensive New Zealand moss.)

After having success with the form from Serra da Canastra, I received seed of another form of *Drosera grantsau* which I suspect is from Diamantina, also in Minas Gerais state, Brazil. This form looks quite different from the first one, although it is growing under identical conditions. While I am sure that some degree of variation among wild populations is due to differences in environmental factors, it seems like certain traits are genetic. Under my conditions, the Serra da Canastra form is generally shorter and greener, with slightly wider leaves and sometimes twisted lamina on older leaves (though I am unsure if this is genetic). The Diamantina (?) form is redder, has longer stems and petioles, with longer nodes and old leaves folding down parallel to the stem. Its growth type reminds me of that of the tropical African form of *D. madagascariensis*, although *Drosera grantsau* is a smaller plant. I have not yet grown the Diamantina plants to flowering, so I cannot comment on flower differences at this time. My plants from Serra da Canastra typically produce fewer than four very light lilac flowers per scape.

Drosera grantsau, like many other South American *Drosera*, is an ideal plant for those of us who grow plants indoors, under lights. It is also growing well under natural light, in a friend's greenhouses. It is a unique plant which is surely worthy of being included in even general carnivorous plant collections as it is a beautiful, easy grower. I have a limited number of plants available for sale or will trade for other South American or African *Drosera*, *Genlisea* or *Heliamphora*. As a final note, more photos of these plants (and many others) in my collection can be seen on my website at <http://www.sundewgrower.com>. Please be sure to visit Fernando and Marcelo's site as well!

References:

- Fontana, Marcelo, A.K., and Rivadavia-Lopes, F. 2001. Plantas Carnívoras do Brasil e do Mundo. <http://www.mcef.ep.usp.br/carnivoras/>, accessed 2001.
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