

DROSERA MACRANTHA SUBSP. *EREMAEA*

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Keywords: cultivation: *Drosera macrantha*, *D. stricticaulis*.

Drosera macrantha is a tuberous *Drosera* native to southeast and southwest regions of Australia and Tasmania (Schlauer 2008). The exact classification of some *D. macrantha* subspecies are under debate, and may be placed under *D. stricticaulis*. For the purposes of this article, I have retained them in *D. macrantha*. *Drosera macrantha* subsp. *eremaea* is a climbing sundew (Cheers 1992) that emerges from the ground in the beginning of autumn. Its tubers have the appearance of a small, round, white egg. In the initial stages of growth, each small sticky leaf takes up to a month to develop into a cup-shape that is green with bright red digestive glands. A month after commencing its growth, the plant grows at a rapid rate of about 1 cm (0.4 in) per day, and soon has a large number of leaves. The internodal length is 3-3.5 cm (1.2-1.4 in). Each leaf node produces a new set of leaves attached to the plant by a thin green stem 5 cm (2 in) in length. After growing for three months, the largest plants in my collection reached its maximum height of approximately 53 cm (21 in) (measured from base of the plant to just below the first flower). The plant produced four flowers; the petals are just over a centimeter in length, are purple in bud, and turn white as they open. The anthers are yellow in colour, which are supported by white filaments and the stigma is green. Pollen granules are yellow, whereas the style and ovary are green. A short pedicel approximately 2 cm (0.8 in) in length supports each flower. Plants do not set seed in my cultivation.

This plant grows very well in pure peat moss (although it is generally recommended that a mixture of peat moss and coarse washed river sand be used for tuberous *Drosera*). My plants receive plenty of direct sunlight throughout the day. Pots should sit in a shallow tray of water. Large pots should be used for growing *Drosera macrantha* as the tubers become pushed down into the growing medium as the plant grows. In addition, tubers multiply during the growing season. Three tubers planted in the same medium sized pot yielded 11 large tubers and three very small tubers at the end of the growing season.

When I last repotted my *D. macrantha* at the end of the season, tubers were placed in new pots containing fresh peat moss and left to dry until next February (the end of summer in Australia). Plants cease growing at the end of spring, usually in October or November. As soon as the plants turn brown, the pot should be removed from the water tray and the growing medium should be allowed to dry out completely during the summer months. During this dormancy period, empty the pot and carefully check the tubers. These can be repotted into a new large pot with the tubers spaced from one another or even planted in separate pots (although it is probably best to place two tubers in the same pot so if one does not grow the other might). Use the same growing medium you used for these same tubers from the previous year's growth.

If you can get them, *Drosera macrantha* may be propagated using seeds, which should be collected and stored until at least one month before autumn when they should be sprinkled onto the surface of the growing medium. Pots should be kept outdoors and kept moist and sitting in water trays. Seeds should sprout in early to mid autumn; usually taking a month or so to sprout. If seeds do not sprout the first year you sowed them, then allow the pot to completely dry out the following spring/summer and then return to the water tray the following autumn where they may finally grow.

A fascinating characteristic of this tuberous *Drosera* is that it produces side shoots from the base of the plant as well as new leaves from some of the leaf nodes. I have observed up to three plantlets growing from the base of one plant. I removed two of these plantlets from the base of an adult plant in the beginning of the winter season, one of these had a large white root that exceeded the actual height of the plantlet's stem and the other had no roots. While both plants grew for a while before dying, neither produced tubers. However, it may be possible to successfully propagate tuberous *Drosera* in this way if cuttings are taken earlier in the growing season.

References

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