Growing *Drosera murfetii*

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In the few years since *Drosera murfetii* has become separated from *Drosera arcturi* as a new species it has become available to growers, though it is certainly not available everywhere. I feel it is sufficiently unusual and interesting to deserve a place in many carnivorous plant collections. I began growing this species several years ago when a generous group of friends gave me a plant, along with an implied "Good luck!" since little was known about its culture. Here are some of my experiences and thoughts about keeping this fascinating species alive and, maybe, thriving.

Drosera murfetii is an odd-ball among sundews (Back Cover). With its strange simple-looking leaves with tentacled ends *D. murfetii* looks like nothing else, other than *D. arcturi*. It has been called *D. arcturi* "giant form" before it was given species status. The leaves are spear-shaped with a pronounced mid-rib and are sometimes completely without tentacles (Fig. 1). They have a 'v'-shaped cross section, the two longitudinal sides separating as the leaf develops. Not very sundew-like. What is very much as you would expect is the tentacles. These grow along the upper surface of the leaf from 1/3 to 2/3 of the length farthest from the main plant and extending to the tip. Another strange thing about this species is the tentacles along the edges generally bend around the leaf to the back side of it. An adaptation allowing the plant to catch insects crawling up or landing on this side of the leaf? *Drosera murfetii* plants generally will have fewer leaves than are common with other *Drosera* and plants with only one leaf, or none, are not uncommon. Or the plant might have 2 or 3 leaves and not a single tentacle among them. I am still mystified as to what triggers the production of non-carnivorous leaves but they seem often to come in groups. A larger plant might have 5 or 6 leaves in the height of its growing season.

Figure 1: *Drosera murfetii.*

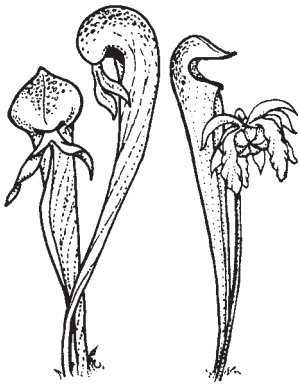
I have found that *D. murfetii* does best for me in pure long-fiber sphagnum (lfs) moss. Does that mean it won't grow well in a peat/perlite type of mix? Not necessarily. It might grow well in living sphagnum moss, or it might not. But in my conditions re-hydrated lfs, not too well-packed, seems to get the best results. I water by keeping the plants in standing water in a tray constantly. If you top-water, for instance, perhaps your plants would do well or even better in another medium. There is still a lot to be tried.

I have tried to grow this species in several conditions but the most successful has been in my garage window. Here the plants get seasonal temperatures from approximately 38°C in summer to 2°C

in winter and they are subjected to humidity fluxes from very high to quite low, depending on the season – and whether or not the clothes dryer has been running. The window in the garage doesn't get any direct sunlight, though there is some reflected off of the neighbor's house next door. To bring up the light levels to approximate full sunlight I use both florescent fixtures and clamp-type fixtures, in which I put standard Edison-type screw-in LED bulbs in the 100-watt equivalent range (~15 watt). I like these because they can be easily moved to fill in darker spots as needed. Since this space never freezes but does have cool temperatures in winter there are generous seasonal temperature shifts without the danger of frost. It would be interesting to see how *D. murfetii* does in full-on temperate winter conditions but I haven't tried it. In my conditions they don't even form anything resembling a winter bud or develop any kind of different leaves as winter approaches, though old leaves may slowly die back leaving only a spike-like green appendage sticking out of the soil. This is what the next leaf will develop out of. Often, they gradually slow in growth until they just kind of stop, at least as far as can be seen. The same thing happens in the heat of summer. It seems to be the in-between times of spring and autumn when the most growth occurs. *Drosera murfetii* is a slow-grower compared to other sundews, though it may have growth spurts when conditions support it. Still, it is not uncommon to have only a single leaf on a plant. In addition, it is possible for a plant to have leaves but no carnivorous leaves. At these times it looks a lot like the foliage of a lily. During the winter period when nothing visible is really happening with the plant, I continue to keep water in the watering tray.

Last year in the spring, for the first time, my plant produced a flower spike (Fig. 2) and later it produced seed. Following that, the main plant divided into 5 growth centers which I later split into separate plants. I am not certain what triggered blooming, but increasing photo period and rising daily temperatures along with lots of food in the previous season were possibly responsible. It is worth noting that leaf cuttings can be taken, if the plant can spare them, and floated in water the way *Drosera* leaves are generally propagated. They are slow to strike but given 1-2 months, plantlets will form under bright lights. This was discovered by Djoni Crawford who kindly shared her discovery with me. I have yet to try root cuttings, but they seem a good bet for increasing plant numbers.

Figure 2: Flowering *Drosera murfetii*. Stigmas can be red, white, or pink, depending on location.



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Front Cover: *Pinguicula involuta* growing on an east-facing vertical cliff dripping with water at 3870 m on the Andes Highlands near Cusco, southern Peru. Photo by Fernando Rivadavia. Article on page 122.

Back Cover: *Drosera murfetii* growing at the type location, Hartz Mountains, Tasmania. Photo by Richard Nunn. Article on page 128.

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