Three *Utricularia* species worthy of cultivation

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The genus *Utricularia* offers more species, with more variety in form and habitat, than any other genus of carnivorous plant, yet in the vast majority of collections it is represented by only a few commonly available species. Granted, there are a some species that can be quite difficult to cultivate, or that are frustratingly shy flowerers. However; there are many more species that are easy to grow and flower that are completely unknown to most growers. Below, I will describe a few species appropriate for growers of all skill levels, the cultivation of which has so far been overlooked by the carnivorous plant literature.

Utricularia flaccida. This species is a particular favourite of mine for its large flowers and vigorous growth. The inflorescence often reaches 30-50 cm in height, with six or more flowers per scape. The flowers are bright yellow, with a touch of red on the palate, and are about 2 cm across. The leaves have an interesting branching shape, which is especially apparent if the plant is grown submerged.

Utricularia welwitschii. When not in flower, *U. welwitschii* is a fine example of why people often overlook this genus—the tiny leaves are a shade of reddish green that blends in almost perfectly with the substrate. The compelling feature of this plant is the wiry scapes which will twine tightly around a support. Often many inflorescences will be present at the same time and these may twine around each other to form a braided rope. The flowers themselves are small but nicely coloured. According to Taylor (1989) not all specimens of this plant exhibit this behaviour, although I think that most clones of this plant in cultivation have this twining trait.

Utricularia tridentata. Although lacking great size or amusing habits this plant is worth growing for the subtle beauty of its flowers (see Figure 1). The well-proportioned bright mauve

Figure 1: *Utricularia tridentata.*

flowers with yellow and white markings on the palate may only be a centimetre across, but they remind one of a scaled-down version of one of the larger Central and South American *Utricularia* species. This plant is often erroneously identified in people's collections, for no good reason, as "*U. steyermarkii*" (Although *Utricularia steyermarkii* is an actual species of *Utricularia* from South America, it is quite different in both flower colour and leaf form.)

None of these species require any special treatment, and are all as easy to grow as *U. sandersonii* or *U. livida*. They will grow vigorously in a warm terrarium, can be planted in a standard mixture of peat and sand, and watered on the tray system. I would encourage all carnivorous plant growers to give them a try.

References:

Taylor, P. 1989, The genus *Utricularia* - a taxonomic monograph, Kew Bull. Add. Ser. 14: 1-724.