DROSERA BINATA

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Of the *Drosera* genus, one of the most commonly grown, and indeed one of the species depicted on the front cover of 'Sundew', is *Drosera binata.* Plants of the type form, now known as *D. binata* 'T Form', were first collected by the French expedition, along Australia's south coast, led by L'Entrecasteaux during 1792. The naturalist who accompanied the expedition, Sabillardiere, first described *D. binata* in 1808.

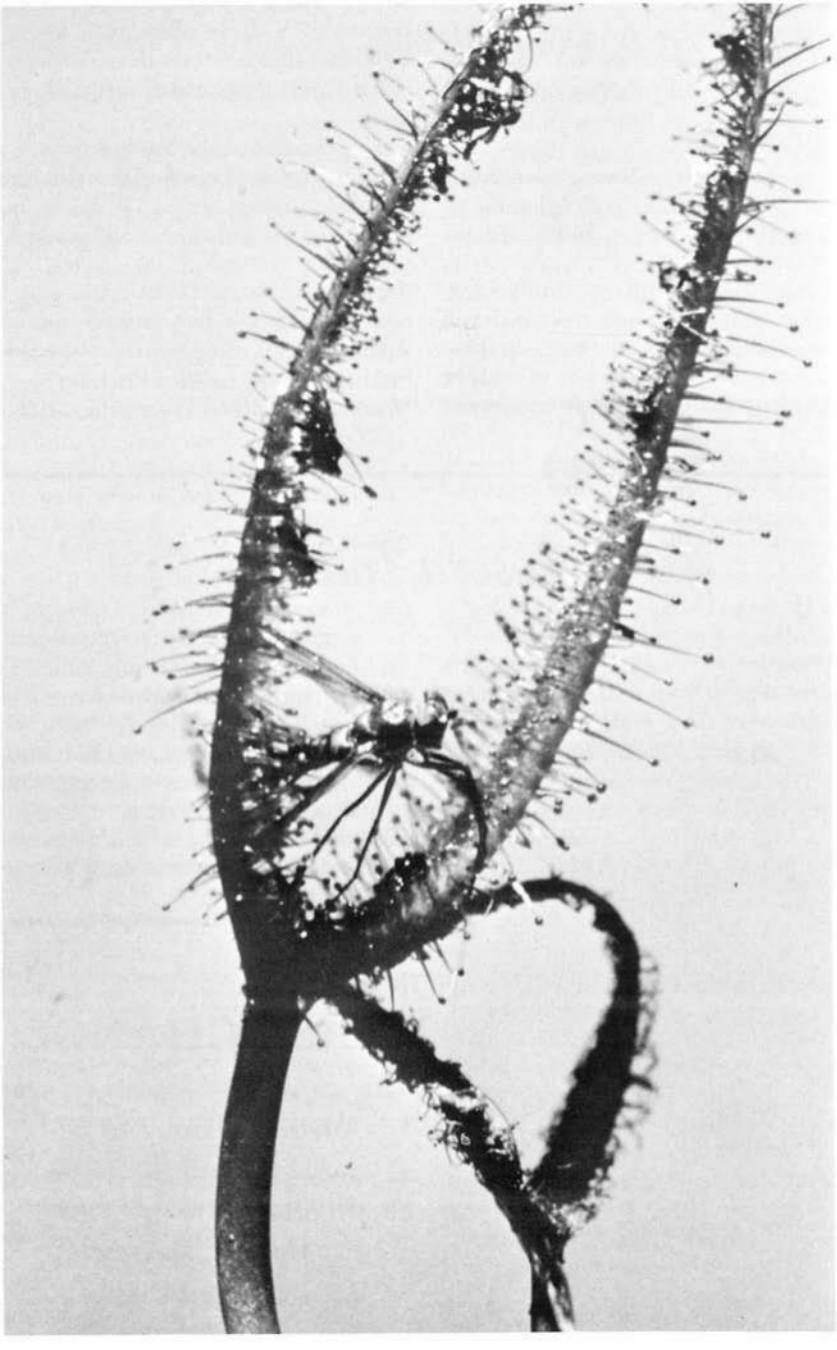
It is a wide spread species extending from Fraser Island southward along coastal south-east Queensland and in N.S.W. extending west as far as the north and south tablelands, the east and west coast of Victoria and inland along some river systems and ranges. Its most western extemity is in South-east South Australia where it occurs in coastal bogs and on Mt. Lofty Ranges. *D. binata* also occurs spasmodically throughout Tasmania and New Zealand.

D. binata requires continual wet acid conditions and naturally inhabits bogs and swamps. In the northern extremities of its growing habitat plants can have one to several short dormant periods during the cooler months. As the species extends south through more temperate areas the winter dormancy period lengthens. In the southern regions *D. binata* will go into dormancy during autumn and not re-appear until mid spring.

The species has been divided into one form and two varieties. The type form, *D. binata* 'T Form', is a hardy plant from the temperate zones. Although it is the smallest of the described sections 'T Form' may still exceed twelve inches in height. Many smooth cylindrical leaf stalks extend from the plant's central crown. Each leaf stalk divides into two, giving a forked or wishbone appearance. The flattened blades of the fork are covered from axis to tip with fine, red, mucilage tipped hairs. I have witnessed very little movement of leaf blades (such as with *D. capensis* etc.), however the dew-tipped tentacles become very active, when an insects comes in contact and make a most effective trap.The new leaves, which are produced from the centre of the crown, start as a tightly wound coil, then unroll much the same as a new fern frond does. Each division of the leaf unrolls in the same fashion thus protecting the tips until the leaf has fully matured. New suckers grow from the base of the plant's crown and may come up from any section of the plant's thick wiry roots. Many ½ inch white, five petalled flowers are bourne on tall racemes. The racemes often exceed twice the plant's height. Although described as a form, *D. binata* 'T Form,' is a genetically stable variety and will always germinate true to type.

By the original description by Darwin, of *D. binata* variety *dichotoma,* it would appear to be of the plant now referred to as the 'Giant Type.' Since the original description a 'Small Type' form has become common in cultivation. Both types of *D. binata* variety *dichotoma* are botanically similar to *D. binata* 'T Form', except that the mature leaf blades divide two or more times giving each leaf between two and eight tips. Often, in either type, an uneven division occurs (e.g. three tips on one side and two on the other). The 'small type'is similar in size and appearance to 'T Form' but usually a pale green colour. The 'Giant Type' which may exceed three feet in height is one of the largest plants in the *Drosera* genus. Its thick, branching flower racemes tower above the foliage height and bear numerous one inch diameter white flowers. Because of apparent differences between both growing habits and flowers of the 'Giant' and 'Small' type, botanists may yet sub-divide them into separate forms or varieties.

D. binata var. *multifida* normally occurs on the warmer northern habitats of the species growing range. It is larger but again vegetatively similar to the type form, except the leaves divide into six or eight segments and the tentacles are usually deep red. A form of this variety, called *"extrema",* which occurs in coastal and island swamps and marshes north of Brisbane, can develop over thirty leaf divisions. Leaves of this form both appear and work like a large spider's web.



Drosera binata

Another less common form of variety *multifida* produces attractive pink flowers, a very sought after plant by C.P. growers. Leaves of var. *multifida* are zygomorphic, the right side being a mirror image of the left. The latter two described varieties of *D. binata* retain the typical wishbone leaf form until the plant has reached maturity.

One of the easiest of *Drosera* to cultivate, *D. binata* makes a lovely multi-planting or basket specimen. Plant in broad shallow pots, to accommodate the large root system. A peat and sand medium is recommended. Position pots in strong light or growth will become weak and mucous won't be produced. Keep the medium wet to sodden during growth periods, and maintain some moisture during dormancy. Feeding with a weak organic fertilizer will help produce strong, healthy growths, but take care not to overdo it. A single plant of *D. binata* can catch and digest hundreds of moths, mosquitoes and other small insects, each growth season.

To propagate, take leaf cuttings or root divisions during the period from mid spring to early summer. Seed of *D. binata* should germinate easily without stratification, but if you're not succeeding, try placing seed in the fridge for two weeks before sowing. Sow seed from early to late spring.

References:

"Plants of Prey" by Rica Erickson
"Carnivorous Plants" by Adrain Slack

Drosera indica

by Bruce Pierson

Drosera indica is an annual species which is fairly easy to grow from seed. I sow the seed on a mixture of three parts peat, one part sand. The seed should be planted in early spring, to ensure the longest possible growing season for the plants. Germination can be slow, particularly if the weather is cool. It can be 4 to 8 weeks before the seed germinates, sometimes longer.

Seedlings seem prone to damping off, particularly if there is insufficient air circulation, so have good air circulation and a not too high humidity. A sunny position seems to suit this plant, with possibly 25% shading in the hotter months. My watering is by the tray method, with 10-20 mm of water in the tray being ideal. I grow 4-6 plants in a 100 mm pot.

Through the growing season, the plant will develop quite a long stem, which is very thin and offers no support to the plant, which will trail along anything in its path. The stem will reach 4.5 cm or longer in the growing season with leaves 1.5 cm long. The flowers are borne on a separate stem to 2.5 cm long, bearing as many as 12 flowers. After setting, the seed will ripen slowly, starting with the pod nearest the stem.

The growing season for this plant is from mid-late spring, until late autumn-early winter. Propagation is by seed only, which must be collected as it ripens, and stored in the fridge until next season (seed falling into the pot will generally remain dormant). At the end of the growing season, the plant will decline and die, dependent on its seed to carry the species on.

LAST CHANCE!

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