Byblis gigantea

by Bill Pamment

Byblis gigantea is an Australian species confined to the South West corner of Western Australia and was first discovered by botanist and collector James Drummond.

Favouring poor, sandy type soils, it prefers moist rather than sodden conditions and should not be grown in a container of water during the growing period. The plant becomes dormant in early autumn and should be allowed to dry out completely during this time until early winter.

Its natural habitat being very dry during autumn, the plant begins new growth at the start of winter, with the coming of the winter rains. If repotting is necessary, it is therefore best carried out just before watering is commenced at the beginning of winter.

The latter half of autumn, about the first or second week in May, is the best time to plant the seed. Seed should be placed in a small screw-top glass container or plastic phial, boiling water poured over the seed, and the top screwed on. It remains in this water for 48 hours, during which time it should be given a gentle shake several times to drive the seed into the water. (This is necessary because the seed has an oily covering which makes it difficult to wet.) At the end of this time most of the seed will be on the bottom of the container: that which is still floating is not of much value and can be disposed of.

Seed quantity planted should be at least two to three times the number of plants required. Quite a few of the baby plants that do germinate die off because of lack of a good root system, and extreme care must be taken at this stage, as these baby plants are extremely fragile. If watering is necessary, soak the container until the surface of the mix is just damp—any excess water will wash the plants out of the mix.

Prepare a squat plastic pot of suitable size to accommodate the quantity of seed being planted, with a mix of two parts of fine, washed sand and on part of either German or Irish peat (both are quite good). Fill the pot to within 2cm of the top, and firm the mix down gently with a smooth, flat object. (I like to use a Kraft cheese glass with its lid, which is nice and flat, on top.) Soak the pot in a container of water deep enough to bring the water level to the top of the mix, allow to drain and then plant the seed.

As the seed will still be wet it must be planted one seed at a time using a sharpened match or tweezers. Take care to leave about 2cm between each seed so that when it comes time to transplant the seedlings, a small ball of mix can be taken

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finish the stand, and R. Cantley for supplying the *Nepenthes*.

Would those who offered help and did not turn up please think carefully before doing so next year? Because of ticket allocation some keen members were *very disappointed*. Alternative arrangements would have meant they could have attended.

Why do we do it?

After the hassle of setting up the stand we question our own sanity. We look back on it and it's a lot of fun even after spending a day on your feet answering questions about Venus fly traps.

The society owes its continuation to Chelsea. It 'tops up' the membership each year to a number that keeps us solvent.

We also sell approx. 400 Guides to C.P. plus other pamphlets, all of the money going to Society funds.

Without doubt interest in C.P. collecting is on the increase and exposure at this sort of event does nothing but good.

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with each seedling, thus causing less root damage.

Having planted the seed, gently press the seed into the mix with the cheese glass lid (instead of covering the seed with the mix), place a sheet of clear glass over the top of the pot and place in a bright corner of the glasshouse. In approximately five weeks' time, two small leaves from each plant should appear. At this time the glass cover may be removed. During this five week period no watering should be necessary.

From the time the plants reach their leaf stage, it is reasonably safe to transplant them into a 15cm plastic pot, in the same mix as above. Place them in a bright position and water. If some coarse pebbles are placed on one side of the pot, on top of the mix, then the plant may be watered from above without disturbing the surface of the mix. Having watered the pot well, it should not be watered again until the top one centimetre of the mix is quite dry. Remember these plants grow in semi-arid conditions, not in a waterlily pond!

The big secret in both growing these plants, and in getting the seed started, is in the watering. "BE MEAN WITH IT," and if, as autumn approaches, the plants show any sign of going dormant (leaves going yellow and looking very scruffy), withdraw the water and let them dry out completely. If they do not go dormant, then just water as normal, as they require it. Growth will, however, slow down quite a lot.

My seedlings, grown under the above conditions, reached a height of 40cm in the first nine months and flowered from every leaf. Having seen this beautiful plant in bright light, with all its beautiful colours reflecting from the leaves, I can understand why it is called the Rainbow Plant.

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Rearing Cobras

by Jennifer Brownfield

These highly prized and unique plants are a must in any C.P. enthusiast's collection. Their incredible bulbous heads and snake-like fangs on top of the twisted stems immediately capture a person's attention and interest. Needless to say, much time can be devoted to ensuring one's plants are in their best health, and due to their relative rarity and high cost, considerable concern is expended over whether what we are doing is best for the plant.

This is the first of a two-part article in which I tell of my methods and techniques for ensuring the proper care and conditions that should be provided for the plant. I initially discuss how to care for mature plants, their likes and dislikes, and complete the submission in the second part, writing about propagating from cuttings of both rhizomes and leaves, and finally about how to raise seeds. At this stage, I would like to make it known that some of the following are observations only and may not be botanically accurate; even though we at Al Carnivor have been raising cobra plants for around ten years now, we still have an occasional failure.

To continue - For the purpose of this explanation I will consider a mature plant to be over two years old, or a minimum of 7cm tall. This ensures that the early juvenile leaves have ceased forming and the following comments will apply.

For the perfectionist, a cobra should have 14 hours of cool, bright light, good air movement with humidity above normal, and its roots constantly washed by underground cold water seepage that has a temperature no warmer than 17°C. Fortunately, cobras are reasonably hardy and fairly forgiving, allowing us, with a few improvisations, to have reasonable success with these plants.

Definitely the first major requirement to consider is how to ensure a cool root system,