On the Care and (Not) Feeding of *D. Adelae, Prolifera* and *Schizandra*

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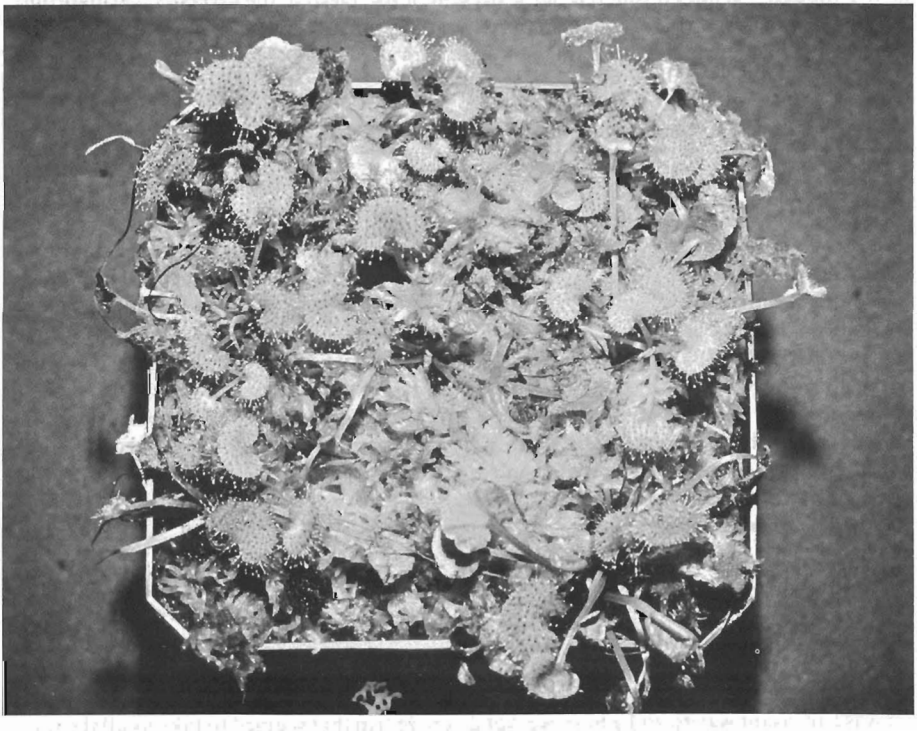
I am relatively new to the keeping of carnivorous plants, (especially when compared to the editors of this newsletter). I have kept plants for about 5 years now, growing some fairly successfully and turning others into low grade organic compost. While I am new to carnivorous plants, I have kept, bred, and occasionally given talks on tropical fish for over 25 years. I would like to preface this article with some thoughts which I have frequently used to begin a talk on breeding tropical fish. The methods which I am about to explain work for me and my specific growing conditions. Since your growing conditions will not be exactly the same as mine, my methods may or may not work well for you. Since we can never exactly duplicate the growing environment other people use, each of us has to determine the methods which work best for us under our own specific conditions. The methods we learn from others can only be used as starting points in finding the methods which will work best for us. Don't be discouraged when you have failures. Finding the methods which work best for you takes trial and error; inevitably leading to some failures (sometimes for the beginner many failures). Only by learning from these failures can each of us find the methods we can use successfully. As a specific example of this, many people grow a large variety of sundews quite successfully in sand-peat mixtures. For me, under my growing conditions, using the types of sand and peat available in this locality, sand-peat mixtures seem to work very poorly.

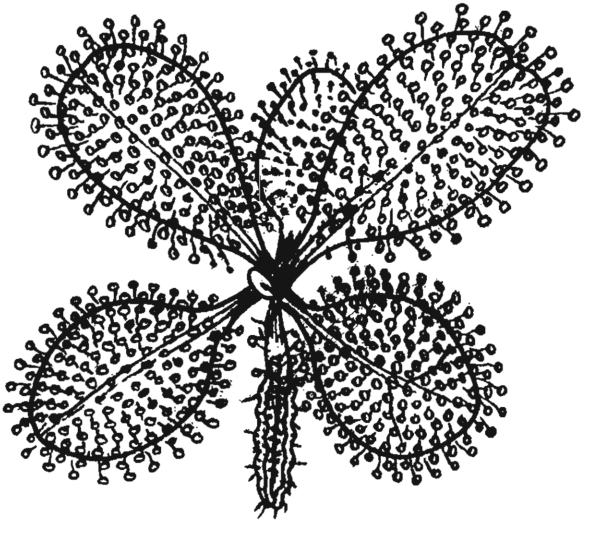


Drosera prolifera growing in sphagnum. Photo by J.A. Mazrimas.

D. adelae, prolifera, and *schizandra* come from the same general area in Australia, and seem to require similar care to survive in cultivation. I have been keeping *D. adelae* successfully for about three years and *D. prolifera* and *D. schizandra* for about a year and one half. Over these time spans the *D. adelae* and *D. prolifera* have each produced over a hundred small plants and the *D. schizandra* about twenty. Although I live in an area that has quite mild growing conditions out of doors almost all year around, these three species are grown indoors under lights. Growing indoors allows the easy maintenance of three of the conditons that these species seem to need for survival in cultivation—low light level, high humidity and mild temperatures.

The potting mixture used is a 50/50 mix of milled Canadian sphagnum peat moss and vermiculite. The adelae and schizandra both have relatively long, thick roots. They are planted with as many of the roots as possible running horizontally, just below the surface of the potting mix. Quite frequently many new plants will develop along these surface roots. In fact, the *D. adelae* which is the source of all the plants I presently have, died a few weeks after I purchased it, but from the surface roots came a half a dozen small plants. The majority of the new plants that the *D. adelae* and *schizandra* have produced have been by this method. Large, bottom leaves which were in contact with the potting medium have also occasionally been the source of new plants. Both species should be able to be reproduced by either leaf cuttings or root cuttings, but I have never tried either. The *D. adelae* produce enough small plants on their own that I never have to try other methods, and the *D. schizandra* never seem quite robust enough that I want to remove any leaves or roots.

The *D. prolifera* is potted in the same mix. However, this species doesn't seem to produce the long, thick roots like the *D. adelae* and *schizandra* or produce new plants from the roots. Therefore, the roots are placed down into the potting medium rather than along the surface. New plants are produced quite easily from this species. *D. prolifera* flowers readily and is almost continually in bloom. The tip of almost every flower spike will produce a new plantlet. If the plantlet is removed from the flower-spike, another will form at the farthest remaining node on the spike. Additionally, older leaves which droop and make contact with the soil frequently produce several new plants.



Drosera schizandra drawing by Ron Fleming

All three species are planted in rather deep pots (3 to 4 inches depth). They are watered by letting them stand in water continuously. The water used is purified by reverse osmosis. It contains less than 17 ppm of calcium and magnesium. The plants should **never** be fertilized. Although many species of carnivorous plants seem to benefit from the application of dilute fertilizer (the tuberous *Drosera* do not grow well without it), to these species the application of fertilizer is lethal. This was learned the hard way—by applying fertilizer to robust, healthy plants and watching them disintegrate in less than a week.

These plants require fairly low light levels. I obtained my *D. prolifera* and *schizandra* from Bruce Pierson in Australia. He told me that he kept his plants in his greenhouse **under** the benches. My plants are grown under a bank of three 40 watt fluorescent lights. The lights are on 16 hours per day, year around. The plants are six to nine inches from the lights. The *D. adelae* seem to prefer the brightest light and is placed in the center of the area directly under the lights. The *D. prolifera* takes slightly lower light levels. They are positioned aorund the edges of the lighted area. The *D. schizandra* do best at the lowest light levels. Not only are they placed at the edges of the lighted area, they are also placed so they are shaded by other plants (e.g. *Nepenthes).*

In addition to low light levels, high humidity is a requirement. The requirements seem to be related to the required light level with the *D. adelae* needing the lowest humidity and the *D. schizandra* the highest. The *D. adelae* will grow and multiply at fairly low levels of humidity, but it no longer looks like a sundew as all the tentacles dry up. For best growth, all three species are kept in a tray of water which is enclosed on all four sides by plastic sheeting. Additionally, a clear plastic dome is placed over the *D. prolifera* and *schizandra,* keeping the humidity around the plants at nearly 100%. The very high humidity provided by the plastic dome seems to be a necessity to grow *D. schizandra* successfully. For all but the largest plants, clear plastic drinking glasses (available in a wide variety of sizes from restaurant supply houses) will do the job very well.

If you are able to provide these species with the growing conditions they require, you will be well rewarded. These species are among the most beautiful of the *Drosera* and are worth the slight extra time and work it takes to grow them well.

Errata

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In the issue of CPN Vol. 16 #3, in "Naming the Hybrids," on page 70 the last sentence of the top paragraph reads-"N. x rokko, N. x balmy koto and N. x masamiae *are all N. maxima crosses"!*

It should read- *"are all N. thorelii x N. maxima crosses."*
Then in the references just under that mistake you have *T. Kusakabe,* and it of course should be *I. Kusakabe.* CPN regrets these errors. (Ed.)

Want Ad

Kenneth Bruyninckx (O.L. Vrouwestr. 58, 2070 Ekeren, BELGIUM) (WB) seeds or plants of the following: *Heliamphora sp., Nepenthes rajah,* South American epiphytic *Utricularia* sp..