Overwintering Dormant Carnivorous Plants

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In the United Kingdom, more losses of stock plants occur during the dormant winter months because of our damp moisture climate allied with low light levels. Consequently, dormant CP are apt to develop mold symptoms for no apparent reasons and they are most devastating to the dormant buds of the *Drosera* family.

The following methods may be worthy of note for those who have plants that suffer similar fates in more or less identical winter conditions:

The Water Immersion Method

Normally, one would reduce the amount of watering to a dormant plant by a considerable amount during the winter months but if *Botrytis* (fungal) attack continues, a complete opposite approach should be considered. Any large container should be filled with rainwater and the dormant plant, pot and soil medium should be totally submerged below the water surface. When growth resumes in the spring, the entire pot and its contents are removed and the plant is once again treated as normal. This method also has the secondary advantage that early spring aphid attacks are reduced substantially. This method may be suitable for other CP genera, but I suggest that spare plants be used to verify that they are suited to such dormant conditions. Thus, it is almost certain that this method should not be used with the Mexican Pinguiculas because many of these require completely dry conditions in the potting medium at this time of year.

These, I personally grow in an enclosed, ventilated and unheated propagator to protect the plants from slug and snail attack rather than problems from molds.

The Refrigerator Method

This method I found to be totally successful in overwintering dormant buds of *Drosera linearis* and may also prove successful for other cool-growing species such as *Pinguicula villosa* although I haven't tried it with this species. *D. linearis* has the annoying habit of requiring a continuously cool winter dormancy condition if they are not to break dormancy and rot off due to mold attack because of the low light level at that time of year. For these plants, the water immersion method will not prevent this from happening.

When *D. linearis* goes into dormancy during the middle of November in the U.K., the buds are removed from the soil medium and wrapped in clear plastic bags with a very small quantity of barely damp, live sphagnum moss. They are placed in the refrigerator (not freezer) where a constant temperature of 34-38°F is maintained. This can first be determined by placing a maximum/minimum thermometer on various shelves to locate the ideal temperature range for the storage of your plant buds.

The buds remain for a period of 5 months when they are removed, potted up and replaced in the greenhouse without fail. It should be noted that the period of 5 months is crucial. If it is too early, the plant will be forced into growth prematurely and will be liable to rot by fungal attack. If it is too late, the plant may succumb to a mold that's present on the still dormant buds.

I would like to acknowledge the following colleagues who supplied the basic ideas: On the immersion method, George Sargeant of U.K. from whom the idea came, from Adrian Slack of U.K. with regard to overwintering *S. psittacina*. On the refrigerator method, Rob Maharajh of Canada with whose idea I managed to overwinter *D. linearis* for the first time. I would like to hear from other growers regarding overwintering methods and individual ways of safeguarding CP no matter where they live.