

# *Drosera*

## The Sundew



*D.intermedia* - Hense Moor

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Sundews are one of the most successful carnivorous plant species and they can be found on every continent apart from Antarctica. Given their distribution on land masses that have been separated for many millennia, this probably means that they are one of the oldest species of carnivorous plants. They mostly grow in boggy areas, though in some parts of the world sundews grow in semi-arid desert that gets regular winter rains or in ground that dries out at certain times of the year. Other species grow in areas that are subject to regular fires and the plants have made various adaptations to survive in these specific conditions.

The majority of the 170 or so species of sundew are currently in cultivation and are attractive in both their flowering and non-flowering states. Some are easy to grow while others are more challenging and best attempted when some experience of the group has been obtained. The range of conditions needed to keep

all species is beyond the scope of this cultivation guide. There are three species of *Drosera* that are native to the British Isles.

Some species are considered semi-tropical and can be kept warm all year round. Others are temperate and will die back to a winter resting bud at the end of the growing season. Other species live in areas that are seasonally wet or dry and survive the dry periods as pea-like tubers, swollen roots or specially modified dormant buds.

Many of the more widely available sundew species grow well in a compost of two parts by volume sphagnum peat to one part lime free sand, although some species prefer a more sandy mix. Coir may be a potential alternative or part substitute to peat for *Drosera*, and has been used successfully by some growers on some species (see "Growing without Peat" Care Sheet). Sundews need direct sunlight to produce their best colours. Plants growing in lower levels of light and/or lower humidity sometimes fail to produce sufficient dew on their leaves. Most of the commonly available species grow best when provided with a minimum temperature of 8°C, except for those that form a winter resting bud (called a hibernacula) which can be kept in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame.

Watering is generally by the tray system, with the pots standing in a few centimetres of water during the growing season. During winter dormancy differing species require either completely dry conditions or some moisture.



*Drosera callistos*—Flowers

A Pygmy *Drosera* species from Australia

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