

Drosophyllum lusitanicum

Portuguese sundew or Dewy Pine



Drosophyllum—plants in habitat

Photo—Andreas Fleischmann

This is a single species genus and contrary to the common name it actually grows on high maritime cliffs and promontories in Portugal, south western Spain and across the Straits of Gibraltar in Morocco. Unlike most other carnivorous plant species *Drosophyllum* does not grow in boggy soil and the cultivation of this plant needs to reflect this point. Rather it grows in sandstone cliffs that are subject to seasonal rains from the Atlantic. The plants also exploit regular sea mists where the water vapour condenses onto the dewy tentacles.

In cultivation the Portuguese Sundew is a relatively straightforward plant to grow as long as a few basic rules are observed. It does not tolerate root disturbance so should be potted up just once during its lifetime. There are a number of ways to achieve this. Seed can be germinated and transplanted almost as soon as they have germinated before the roots have had a chance to develop, into a 6" (15cm) pot. Sowing the seed into either a peat pot or peat plugs may also prove

effective. Coir may be a potential alternative or part substitute to peat for *Drosophyllum*, but as yet is unproven (see "Growing without Peat" Care Sheet). One other method is to use the pot within a pot method. With this technique the seed is started in a small 2.5" (6cm) terracotta pot. Once the seedling has grown on the entire pot is transplanted into a larger 6" (15cm) terracotta plant with the smaller pot standing proud of the soil surface. The idea is that the plant's root will find its way eventually into the larger pot. A very gritty soil is used and only the soil in the large pot is watered, water will find its way into the smaller pot without ever making it waterlogged.

The seed has a tough outer case and germination can often be speeded up by roughening up the seed case with a little medium grit sandpaper.

A free draining compost of two parts by volume coarse grit, two parts sharp sand and one part sphagnum is recommended.

Watering should serve only to moisten the compost even during the hottest periods of weather. Plants should ideally be grown in deep terracotta pots which will accommodate the roots, help maintain a cool root system and will allow the soil to dry out quickly. As a general guide to watering, if plants appear less dewy it is time to water them. If in doubt it is better to slightly over-water as the open compost will tend to prevent the plant from getting too wet.

The Portuguese Sundew grows best in a sunny but cool glasshouse where a winter minimum temperature of 5°C can be provided. In the summer they will tolerate occasional showers and can be grown outdoors. During the winter months watering should virtually cease and should only start again with the onset of spring.



Drosophyllum—flower with pollinator

Photo—Andreas Fleischmann