

# Sarracenia

## North American Pitcher Plants



*Sarracenia* 'Blood Sweat and Tears'

Photo—Phil Wilson

and are capable of surviving temperatures down to as  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  and will grow satisfactorily outdoors in a bog garden. To achieve best results grow on a sunny windowsill or in a sunny cool glasshouse. Insufficient light provision seems to be one of the major factors in the death of cultivated plants. Plants may be fed with a weak feed of roughly 1/4 strength liquid fertiliser but care needs to be taken to prevent over feeding of these plants and for the beginner it recommended to not feed the plants at all as they will get plenty of nutrition from the insects they trap.

Propagation can be by seed or splitting of mature plants. Seeds needs to undergo a cold period called stratification before it will germinate. This can be achieved either by sowing during the colder months and allowing a natural cold period, or by placing the pots in bags and then leave them in a fridge for at least six weeks. Cover the seeds to approximately their own depth. Seeds will start to germinate after the weather has warmed up—germination tends to depend on how fresh the seed is but usually takes place in 4-6 weeks. Seedlings will form miniature pitchers after their initial seed leaves but are very slow growing taking up to 6 years to reach maturity, much depending on growing conditions.

A faster method of propagation is by splitting mature plants. For best results this should only be done in late winter/early spring, before new growth emerges to limit plant stress. The plant forms rhizomes which naturally divide into multiple growing points. Some species divide more than others. These growing points can be pulled off the main plant and potted up as new plants. Even pieces of plant without roots can be potted up in this way. Keep out of full sun for a few weeks until new growth is seen, In addition the old bare rhizome can be used for cutting material. Pot it up in a new pot burying to about half its depth. Roots are not necessary and can be removed. Keep out of full sunlight. After a few weeks new growths will appear. When these have grown a few pitchers remove by cutting from the main rhizome with a sharp knife and pot up.

The genus grows along the eastern edge of the USA, extending south into Florida and west along the gulf coast with a couple of very rare species and sub-species occurring in central south-eastern areas. One species grows in the northern areas of the continent occurring in several Canadian provinces and reaching as far north as Newfoundland and possibly further north.

All are easy to grow as long as a few basic factors are realised. Plants are widely available in garden centres and on line nurseries. A reliable and popular compost is three parts by volume peat to one part perlite, but a mix of equal three parts coir (see "Growing without Peat "Care Sheet) and perlite has also be shown to work well with most species. Alternatively the perlite may be substituted for washed lime-free sharp sand. A lime-free horticultural grade grit can also be added, which also adds weight to the compost and helps prevent the pot toppling over where tall species are grown In the summer Trumpet pitchers should be watered using the tray system with pots standing in several centimetres of water. As winter dormancy approaches, the water level should be gradually reduced until the peat mix in the pots is just damp. If this procedure is not followed there is a chance that the rhizome may rot.

*Sarracenia* should be grown in full sun throughout the year. Most species are hardy



*Sarracenia flava* var. *ornata*

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