

# *Utricularia*

## The Bladderworts



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*Utricularia fulva*

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*Utricularia* are found on every continent except for Antarctica and are one of the most successful of the carnivorous plant genera. The genus can be split into two basic types for cultivation purposes. The free floating aquatic species and the terrestrial species that grow in soil or boggy ground that is often, though not always subject to regular flooding.

Most of the commonly available species are terrestrial though occasionally growers will find aquatic species offered for sale too. The traps in the terrestrial species grow in the soil and are very small but still visible to the naked eye. They trap small soil living organisms and are among the most sophisticated traps of all carnivorous plants. Most *Utricularia* however, are grown for their flowers which are borne on dainty scapes.

The majority of the low growing terrestrial species thrive in a compost comprising two parts by volume peat and one part sand. Coir may be a potential alternative or part substitute to peat for *Utricularia*, but as yet is unproven (see "Growing without Peat" Care Sheet). Watering should be by the tray system with the pots standing in water all year. Most of the small species grow well in bright



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*Utricularia blanchettii*

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shade to full sun. The larger growing tropical species grow better in more open compost containing live or dried Sphagnum moss, peat, orchid bark and perlite in equal proportions.

Watering requirements vary according to species but most do well on the tray system. Several terrestrial species enter dormancy during the winter months when the compost should be kept just moist. The larger tropical species grow best in partial sun or light shade.

Many of the aquatic species can be difficult to grow and are best suited to a large aquarium or low-nutrient acidic pond. A few smaller growing species will do well in small containers including jam jars and old kitchen bowls.

Temperate aquatic species are best grown outdoors where they will have a chance to enter dormancy in the winter. Tropical aquatic species are best grown in a glasshouse. Some species may require an aquarium heater to keep the water warm in winter.

One of the major problems growers encounter with aquatic species is algae. The filamentous type known as 'blanket weed' can be a nuisance and is indicative of high light and or nutrient levels. To remedy this, the container or pond should be sited in a location that receives some shading during the day. Oxygenating plants are an essential component of any pond set up. Floating plants such as water fern, duckweed, or water lilies will reduce both light penetration and nutrient levels. The addition of water fleas or similar organisms will also help by providing prey and reducing algal growth.