



NEPENTHES CARE GUIDE

Nepenthes - also known as **tropical pitcher plants** or **monkey cups** - have been inspiring awe in botanists since they were first discovered hundreds of years ago. With their dazzling colours and elaborately decorative traps, the plants seem to flaunt their carnivory with pride.

Growing Locations

There are over 170 species of Nepenthes, plus countless natural and cultivated hybrids. For this reason it's difficult to offer generalised advice which is applicable to all species! However, the guidance below is a good start for some of the more commonly-available varieties.

Most tropical pitcher plants grow in the upper canopy of the rainforest and prefer very bright light, but without much direct sun. Diffused or partial sun is ideal. In the northern hemisphere that could be an east or west-facing window which receives direct sun for only part of the day, or a greenhouse with 50% shade cloth.

Highland species prefer warm days and cool nights, e.g. 20-25°C during the day and 10-15°C at night. These tend to be the showiest species.



Lowlanders need hot days and warm nights, e.g. closer to 30°C days and 20°C nights. Cold snaps can be lethal. Intermediates - and many hybrids - sit somewhere in-between, and are often more tolerant than pure highlanders or lowlanders. For all varieties, humidity should be quite high - at least 50% relative humidity (RH) during the daytime, and higher at night. A lack of inflating pitchers on your plant can be a sign of insufficient humidity.

Watering

Nepenthes benefit from frequent watering. Aim to keep the soil damp at all times and never let it dry out completely. Always use pots with plenty of drainage holes. Unlike many other carnivores, Nepenthes are not bog plants and do not appreciate having waterlogged soil. As such, avoid standing them in water for extended periods, since this can cause root rot. For long-term healthy growth, stick to rainwater, distilled or deionised water. See my website for more information.

Feeding

If you are growing your Nepenthes where they will not be able to catch their own food, dried insects can be dropped into the pitchers every few weeks. You can also spray orchid fertiliser into the pitchers.

Winter Care

Nepenthes do not require a winter dormancy, but if you're growing under natural light, the shorter daylight hours will often slow your plant down significantly. Lower temperatures can kill lowlanders, while some highlanders can tolerate down to about 9-10°C but will stop growing and their pitchers will die back. Kept under artificial light at constant temperatures they will grow year-round.

Compost

Nepenthes are quite tolerant when it comes to soil. They enjoy a loose, low-nutrition growing medium which keeps their roots aerated and allows excess water to quickly drain away while still retaining some moisture. As a general rule, a mixture of long-fibered sphagnum moss, perlite, and - optionally - orchid bark works well. I offer ready-made mixes on my shop.