

# Cultivating and Propagating the Albany Pitcher Plant, *Cephalotus follicularis*

## The New England Carnivorous Plant Society

By Jeff Matteson

Growing cephalotus plants can be a challenge for some people at first. Below are basic methods I have used to grow and propagate this plant for over twenty years. My methods are by no means foolproof. Everyone has their own growing environment. I will try to explain mine here.

### Soil:

I use two parts sphagnum peat moss, one part coarse silica sand, and one part chunky perlite. The top inch of soil I usually make without the perlite.

### Pots:

I have tried just about every kind of pot you can think of to grow cephalotus, from 2 inch plastic pots to 5 gallon buckets. A 6 to 8 inch wide plastic pot, 6 inches deep works fine for most plants. A wider pot means you will not have to worry about repotting for a few years. Cephalotus plants do not like their roots disturbed much. Ceramic pots work fine but they can make the soil dry out faster.

### Water:

Rain water, distilled or good clean well water works good for this plant. If using well water it's a good idea to have your water tested to see how pure and clean it is. My well water is 22 ppm right from the well and my plants grow just fine. I find it better to keep the crown of the plant dry and water by the tray method. A constantly wet crown will promote rotting. Soil should be damp but not waterlogged. Too wet and you might experience sudden death syndrome from root rot. The whole plant will collapse. If this happens you should pull the entire plant out, wash it all off and try and save any unaffected roots by separating and repotting.

## **Light:**

Cephs will grow just fine under fluorescent Lighting. T-12 fixtures work good but for good color in your plant you will need the light to be about 6 inches above the plant. I use T-5 high output fixtures. They are very bright and can be placed a few feet above the plant. You can burn your plants if a T-5 fixture is too close. The distance between your plant and it's light source varies at times due to the type of bulb and the age of the bulbs.

## **Humidity:**

Cephalotus plants can grow in a wide range of humidity levels. 60% to 90% is good. Mine often go down to 40% during the winter months with no problems.

## **Air Circulation:**

I grow my plants almost solely in the basement. To keep the air fresh I use many fans. On one grow rack I use three 6 inch fans to keep the air moving. Stagnant air in a damp basement will almost always Lead to fungus problems. If you see a whit fuzzy film appearing on your plants you should spray it with a fungicide immediately. If left untreated it can eventually kill your ceph. It's also a good idea to turn your pots every few days so the air flow gets in all those tight places.

## **Feeding:**

I don't feed the pitchers very often myself. Bt when I do I will sometimes use dried blood worms. A very small amount for each pitcher. Too much food in the pitcher will often kill it.

## **Repotting:**

Every two to three years. A good healthy plant can survive a complete washing off of all roots and be repotted without much of a problem.

## **Propagating:**

This can be done in many different ways. Leaf, pitcher or division. I usually do leaf or pitcher cuttings. It does not shock the plant as much as divisions. You want to separate the leaf or pitcher right where it connects to the growth point. Getting a little bit of the white tissue. Dip it in a powder or liquid rooting hormone then place in a clear sealed container with chopped long fiber sphagnum moss. Make sure the moss is good and damp. Chopped up live sphagnum is even better. You want high humidity and bright light. If all goes well in about 5 to 8 weeks you will have roots starting to shoot out from the cut end. The roots are very brittle! Once they get about an inch long you should very gingerly pot up the cutting. Try not to break those roots!

# Cephalotus follicularis

