

Care of the Cape Sundew *Drosera capensis*

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Drosera capensis is a carnivorous plant native to the cape of South Africa. It produces sticky mucilage on its leaves and will capture and digest small insects (like gnats and fruit flies) to compensate for the nutrient poor soils where it grows.

As carnivorous plants go, it is considered one of the easiest carnivorous plants to grow and propagate because it is relatively easy to meet its needs - but keep in mind that it is still an unusual plant that has evolved to grow in conditions where other plants struggle and understanding its needs is key to helping it thrive.

Light: *Drosera capensis* likes bright light.

Soil: Like most carnivorous plants, *Drosera capensis* grows in acidic nutrient poor bogs. Most people grow them in mixtures of peat moss, perlite, sand or sphagnum moss. I grow them in a mixture of ½ peat moss and ½ perlite. Potting soil used for most houseplants will quickly kill it.

Water: *Drosera capensis* grows in bogs that are constantly wet. This makes watering easy because you can just have it sitting in a tray with about an inch of water at all times. It does not like to dry out. The quality of water, however, is important. It does not like minerals in its water so use distilled, deionized, reverse osmosis purified or rain water. I use distilled water.

Temperature: The Cape Sundew grows best in a temperature range of 40 – 80 degrees Fahrenheit. This is usually pretty easy to accommodate indoors. It can handle higher temperatures and temperatures down below freezing but may die back to the roots and return when conditions are better.

Dormancy: Unlike the Venus Flytrap, The Cape Sundew does not require or want a winter dormancy.

Humidity: Bogs are very humid places. With bright light, good water, comfortable temperatures and humidity, sundews will produce lots of sticky goo on their tentacles which it uses to capture prey. Despite Colorado's dry climate, I have found that *Drosera capensis* can still grow and thrive in our environment. Growing them in a tray of water helps increase the humidity around the plant. You may notice that your sundew has its best dew early in the morning when humidity is typically higher.

Fertilizer: These plants have evolved the carnivorous or insectivorous habit to grow and thrive in nutrient poor soils. They do not like nutrients at their roots so don't fertilize them. Advanced growers may feed them by spraying a very dilute fertilizer solution on their leaves but this is not necessary if your plant has the opportunity to capture the occasional insect.

Propagation: Once mature, the Cape Sundew will produce a flower stalk with small purple flowers that open sequentially. The flowers are self-fertile and will produce thousands of tiny dark seeds. These are easy to germinate and grow in the same conditions as the adult plant. They can also be propagated by leaf, stem and root cuttings.