



Cephalotus follicularis (Albany pitcher plant)



Cephalotus follicularis is a small ground-hugging perennial plant with pitchers that resemble mocassins. Plant colours range from light green to dark red with cream highlights; the depth of colour is heavily influenced by the amount of sunlight. The white flowers are small and insignificant.

Distribution and habitat

The Albany pitcher plant as the name suggests, is native to the region of the town of Albany in Western Australia. It grows in nutrient poor peaty sand in swamps, bogs and seeps. It has a very restricted range and is becoming rare in the wild as a result of habitat destruction.

Light

The Albany pitcher plant can be grown outside in half sun to almost full sun or inside in a bright location where there is at least 4 hours of direct sunlight daily. Long thin leaves and few pitchers indicate insufficient light.

Temperature

In the wild, *Cephalotus* prefers temperatures of up to 25°C in the growing season. In cultivation it can withstand temperatures of up to 40°C as long as humidity is kept sufficiently high.

Water

Sit the plant in a wide dish or tray with a water level of 10mm-20mm. Reduce the level during autumn, winter and early spring so that the potting mix is moist rather than wet as excessive wetness in the cooler months can lead to root rot. Do not allow the pot to dry out at any time.

Rain water is preferable but if unavailable tap water may be used as long as it is not alkaline. To guard against a build-up of dissolved salts and minerals which can be present in tap water, periodically flush the pots and

saucers with water from above and allow the water to drain away.

Fertilizer

Cephalotus does not need feeding as it catches its own food. Fertilizers will raise the nutrients in the pot to toxic levels and may kill the plant.

Growing media

1. 100% Sphagnum moss peat.

2. Various combinations of Sphagnum moss peat, Sphagnum moss, washed coarse river sand and composted pine bark.

Repot and divide clumps when the plants get crowded in late winter to early spring, being careful not to damage the roots.

Dormancy

Winter frosts will not kill the Albany pitcher plant but will slow its growth too much, so provide some protection from severe frosts while still allowing the plant a cool winter dormancy period for faster, healthier growth in spring.

Propagation

1. Seed.

2. Clump division (risky). *Cephalotus* does not like root disturbance.

Common pests and diseases

Fungal disease.

It is normal for old leaves and pitchers to die as new ones grow to replace them. Hygiene is important – to keep the plant tidy and to lessen the chances of fungal disease, cut off all dead parts, leaving live parts intact.

When to repot

When the plant appears to be outgrowing its pot.

Credits:

Text contributed by P. Reyter and M. Chong.

Photo by M. Chong.

Edited by M. Chong.

Australasian Carnivorous Plant Society Inc.
P.O. Box 70
Burwood, NSW 1805

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