



## Drosophyllum

(Portuguese Sundew or Dewy Pine)



*Drosophyllum* is a genus of carnivorous plants containing the single species *Drosophyllum lusitanicum* (Portuguese Sundew or Dewy Pine). In appearance it is similar to the related genus *Drosera* (the sundews), and to the much more distantly related *Byblis* (the rainbow plants).

*Drosophyllum lusitanicum* is native to the western Mediterranean region (Portugal, Spain and Morocco), and is one of the few carnivorous plants to grow in dry, alkaline soils. The 20-40cm glandular leaves, which uncoil from a central rosette, lack the power of movement common to most sundews, but have the unusual characteristic of being coiled outward when immature. The plant has a distinct sweet aroma, reminiscent of honey, which attracts the insects it preys upon.

When insects land on the leaves, they find themselves stuck to the mucilage secreted by the stalked glands on the leaves. The more the insects struggle, the more ensnared they become, ultimately dying of suffocation or exhaustion. The plant then secretes enzymes which dissolve the insects and release the nutrients which are then absorbed by the plant. The plant uses these nutrients to compensate for the nutrient-poor soil it grows in.

*Drosophyllum lusitanicum* bears bright yellow flowers that are 4cm in diameter and are borne in groups of 3-15 from Spring to Summer. The translucent seedpods bear 3-10 black pear shaped seeds, 2.5mm in diameter. (Source: Wikipedia)

### Climate

Mediterranean. Temperature range 0 to 40°C.

### Habitat

*Drosophyllum* is native to the western Mediterranean region (Portugal, Spain and Morocco), and is one of the few carnivorous plants to grow in dry, alkaline soils (Source: Wikipedia). *Drosophyllum* grow on mostly barren, rocky hillsides, south-facing slopes, and areas with significant amounts of disturbance (Source: www.sarracenia.com)

Most of the populations are found in coastal Portugal, from north of Porto southwards to the Gulf of Cádiz. Additional populations occur 200 km further to the east. Scattered Spanish sites occur southwards to near the Straits of Gibraltar and at least one population occurs on the extreme northern tip of Morocco. One Portuguese population is far from the others, 200 km inland near Portalegre (Source: www.sarracenia.com).

### Light

Full sun to 10% shade.

### Humidity

Low to moderate.

### Dormancy

No dormancy period. Growth slows in the colder months.

### Compost

Coarse sand mixed with a small amount of peat. Must be well drained.

### Pot size

Minimum pot size is 200mm full length, plastic or terracotta. Many publications recommend the double pot method as the only successful method; however this is not required provided well draining potting mixes are used. Use a little sphagnum moss in the bottom of the pots to stop the potting mix from washing out of the bottom of the pots.

### Watering

Watering from above is recommended. Watering via the tray method is possible using larger pots and coarse potting media. Allow the water tray to dry out before re-watering. Use rainwater when possible.

### Fertilization

Ground fish food pellets or flakes may be used to supplement poor insect capture.

### Propagation

Seed is the only known method of propagation. Sow seed year round. In the wild seed is produced during the summer and germinates in the autumn and winter. The seed may be stratified prior to sowing to increase the germination rate. Stratification may be done by boiling water, cutting the seed coat or grinding the seed coat down to the white endosperm.

Soak the seed in water for 1 to 2 days and pot into the recommended potting media. Seeds may be transplanted to their final pot when less than 5cm tall. Alternately, sow the seeds into peat pots. Seedlings may remain in these pots until the grower has confidence they will survive and then planted into the larger final pot. This method minimizes root disturbance.



### **Pests and Diseases**

*Drosophyllum* are susceptible to root rot in wet conditions. Good aeration of the potting media reduces the risk. Phosphoric acid may be used on a plant succumbing to root rot. I am unaware of any insect pest but assume caterpillars may find the leaves attractive. Use any low toxicity insecticide to control caterpillars.

### **Cultivars**

There are no known cultivars.

### **General Notes**

It should be noted that *Drosophyllum* seedlings have a high rate of mortality (approx 50%) despite the best cultivation techniques provided. Some authors state that *Drosophyllum* resent any root disturbance; however I have successfully transplanted three established plants after dropping the pot off my patio. Based on this limited experience there appears to be a vulnerable period for the seedlings in the first six months before a grower can have confidence that they will reach maturity.

#### **Credits:**

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