

Specialty
Tropicals

Care Instructions
Nepenthes (NEP-)

Species & Common Names:	Nepenthes (many species and cultivars offered); Tropical Pitcher Plant; Monkey Cup
Origin:	Malay Archipelago, Australia, Madagascar, Southeast Asia in jungle understory and other tropical areas
Characteristics:	Nepenthes are carnivorous plants, growing as epiphytes in the wild (epiphytes are plants that grow clinging to trees, roots, rocks, and other non-soil substrates.) Because they don't grow in fertile soil like most plants, they have the ability to capture and digest prey (mostly insects, though a very few large species in the wild are known to occasionally capture frogs, small mammals, and even small birds.) These plants typically begin life as a flat circle of leaves (called a "basal whorl" in botanical terms) and eventually grow upward, producing a sort of clambering, messy vine. As the plant matures, many of its new leaves will be tipped by tendrils from which grow a single "pitcher" trap. The plant secretes its own digestive juices (a complex of enzymes and other chemicals that break apart protein bonds in its prey and allow them to liquify so the plant can absorb them), which are diluted somewhat by incidental rainwater that splashes into the pitchers.
Temperature:	Nepenthes are tropical, so they can't stay cold weather. Broadly, they fall into three major categories: Highland, Lowland, and Intermediate. Highland species prefer somewhat cooler temperatures, Lowland ones the most warmth and as you might expect, Intermediates fall right in-between the two. With few exceptions, most of the plants we sell are hybrids or intermediate species. In our greenhouses, they live in temperatures of 85°F by day and 65°F at night. In the home environment, they'll appreciate warmth during the day, so avoid drafty locations near an air

	<p>conditioning vent. Place the plant in the warmest spot in your house, and it should be happy. If you live in a warm-temperate climate like the US South, where we're located, they do well hanging outdoors in warm weather, as well, as long as you pay attention to their other requirements.</p>
<p>Potting and Soil:</p>	<p>As mentioned earlier, Nepenthes naturally grow in places where their roots are at least partly exposed, and never in fertile soil. Potting soil will kill your plant quickly! In our nursery, we grow Nepenthes in a 50/50 mixture of perlite (a volcanic rock that's "popped" like popcorn, to produce white, fluffy bits often mistaken for styrofoam when seen in commercial potting mixes) and long-fiber sphagnum (a type of peat moss.) The moss holds sufficient moisture for the plant, while the perlite allows air to circulate through the potting mix, which is very important for the root system. Nepenthes have a surprisingly small root system, compared to most plants their size, so don't be shocked when you repot your specimen. Often, larger pots are only required when the plant spills over too much, but rarely because the roots get crowded. We strongly recommend only using the above combination for potting. We offer both high quality long-fiber sphagnum (you can't use any other type of moss successfully, in our experience, and ours is orchid-grade moss, sustainably harvested in New Zealand and Chile, which produce the gold standard for this product) and horticultural grade perlite, as well as premade 50/50 Nepenthes Mix.</p> <p>When it comes to choice of containers, we prefer open-mesh orchid baskets (which many of our plants come potted in.) Small plants can thrive just fine in a plastic pot (ceramic pots tend to accumulate mineral deposits that can be fatal to the plant.) We also use slatted wooden orchid baskets for some of our specimen plants in the greenhouse. If your plant comes potted in a solid plastic pot, we suggest an open, airy container when it grows enough to move it to a larger one.</p>

Light:	Nepenthes love what we call "bright shade". In our greenhouses, they grow under 70% shade cloth year-round. A bright spot under a covered porch is perfect in warm weather; indoors, a warm spot near a window works well for many species. If you don't have these conditions, grow-lights are available inexpensively and greatly help Nepenthes. You'll want full-spectrum "natural daylight" LED or bulb, and we can offer advice about the photoperiod for your plant, if needed.
Water:	Unlike many common houseplants, Nepenthes are highly sensitive to water quality. Unless you have exceptionally pure tap water (not just "clean", but extremely low in dissolved solids. A TDS (Total Dissolved Solids) meter is available online for around \$20, if you want to find out about your own, but few places have water that's safe for these plants. In the greenhouse, they're treated to water that's processed through a reverse osmosis filtration unit, ensuring that it is very low in mineral content. At home, there are two easy, inexpensive options: rainwater (assuming you don't have a lot of chemical pollutants) or distilled water, purchased from the store. Don't use "drinking water", as that actually has extra minerals ADDED, to improve the taste. You need pure distilled water, the kind that has so little flavor, it doesn't even taste like water! Water Nepenthes often enough to ensure the moss mix stays moist at all times, but never waterlogged. These plants suffer from root rot easily if left standing in water. Likewise, they will dry up and die if allowed to become fully dry.
Humidity:	The key element for really healthy Nepenthes is humidity. These are tropical plants in the truest sense of the word, living mostly in humid jungle environments in the wild. Our greenhouses maintain 75-80% humidity constantly, and our plants love it! At home, you can easily give them an assist by keeping a clean mister bottle of distilled water nearby and giving them a quick spritz a few times a day. If you live in the South like we do, outdoor

	<p>humidity is often high enough for them to thrive on the porch or hanging from a tree limb in summer. If it's pretty miserable for humans, it's just right for Nepenthes! Other options are a terrarium or a humidity tray (a simple tray at least 1" deep, with pebbles in the bottom; set the plant on the pebbles and add water to below the level of the pot. Rising evaporation will help keep up humidity around the plant, as long as you keep water in the tray. Remember, NEVER allow their pots to sit in water! Without proper humidity, the plant may remain green and viable for a long time, but will cease to grow pitchers on new leaves. High humidity is critical to pitcher development and without it, the leaf-tip tendril just shrivels and turns brown without making a pitcher.</p>
<p>Feeding:</p>	<p>Unless you're an expert grower, it's best NOT to try to fertilize your Nepenthes. They'll grow much better with no fertilizer, than with too much. If you use any, we recommend SeaMax, a seaweed-derived organic fertilizer, diluted to no more than 1/16-1/8 of the label directions and SPRAYED onto the leaves once a month. Of course, you can toss a live or freshly-dead insect into the traps occasionally, but be aware that the more the plant eats, the quicker the traps will dry up and die. They have a finite life cycle, and when they've contributed enough to the plant's nutrition, will dry and turn brown and crunchy. Simply snip the long, thin tendril at the tip of the main leaf and toss away the old traps. This helps encourage new ones to form, in our experience.</p>
<p>Other Things to Know:</p>	<p>Just like the pitchers, leaves on Nepenthes will eventually brown and die. A dead leaf or two on a plant is normal and isn't usually a sign of any problem. Simply cut the leaf near its base with a clean, sharp knife or pair of scissors and discard.</p> <p>Once you get the hang of growing one Nepenthes, you'll be happy to hear there are literally thousands of species and cultivars, each with its own unique qualities. Among the most-prized</p>

characteristics among collectors are pitcher size, coloration, shape, and the shape and coloration of the pitcher lip. Plants range from very inexpensive (< \$30) to much more (up to several hundred dollars) for some rare and specimen-grade plants.

When you order from our website, you will see photos of each species. If the description says "SPECIMEN", you can know that the plant you will receive is the exact one in the photo labeled "as shipped"; if not, the "as shipped" picture is an example of how most plants we sell look, not the exact plant you may receive. If you need some guidance about which plant is best for you, based on your experience and growing conditions, please feel free to contact us! We love to "talk shop" about plants!!

**VERY
IMPORTANT:**

On arrival, please fill each open pitcher about 1/3 full with fresh distilled water.

Nepenthes are shipped with large plastic bags, intended for helping the plant acclimate to its new environment. Moving from our computer-controlled greenhouse to your kitchen windowsill can be traumatic at best, and we find that acclimating the plant for at least two weeks in the provided bag will help greatly to reduce stress and give it the best chance to survive and thrive. Simply place the plant inside the bag. At first, zip or close the bag about 80%; over the two week minimum acclimation period, gradually open the bag a bit more. Ensure that the moss around the plant stays moist at all times, and the bag will do the work of maintaining high humidity. If your plant seems to struggle when removed from the bag, try placing it on a humidity tray, ensure that it has the warmest possible spot in your home (at least 70 degrees, preferably warmer, never more than 90 degrees Fahrenheit) and make sure it gets bright light but NEVER direct sun.

Please be patient, as these plants can take a while to adjust and come into their own, but given proper conditions as outlined above, you'll find they respond well and give you many years of enjoyment!