

## Darlingtonia californica – Cobra Lily

*Darlingtonia californica* is found in sphagnum bogs and seeps in northern California and coastal Oregon. Its typical environment is a mild slope with water flowing through, but it may also be found on protected dripping cliff faces. The slopes may be any exposure from hot sunny lowland south facing to cool highland north facing. What all or almost all the wild locations have in common is cold spring water constantly flowing through the habitat. It is believed the difficulty growing the plants in captivity is keeping the roots cool during warm weather.

### Propagation

*Darlingtonia* seeds need a damp cold stratification for 4 weeks before they will germinate. The method that uses the least space in the refrigerator is to place the seeds in a small plastic bag with a few large pinches of damp chopped sphagnum. Keep the seed in the refrigerator 4 weeks. If you plan on keeping the plants in a terrarium for an extended period, you may start the seeds at any time.

If you live in an area where *Darlingtonia* can be grown outside unprotected year round, consider starting the seeds in pots outside during the winter.

For seeds to be started indoors or in a greenhouse, the seed should be stratified in the refrigerator. The method that uses the least space in the refrigerator is to place the seeds in a small plastic bag with a few large pinches of damp chopped sphagnum. Keep the seed in the refrigerator 4 weeks.

Sow the seed on the surface of finely chopped sphagnum moss. Live sphagnum works best but needs to be trimmed back regularly. Don't bury the seed, place seed about 5mm apart. If the seed have not already been stratified, put the pot in a plastic bag and store in a refrigerator, garage, or other location that stays between a few to 10°C above freezing for 4 weeks.

After stratification, move the pots to a bright, location. You may leave the pots in the plastic bags until the seeds start to germinate but as soon as they start to germinate, remove the pots from the bags or at least open the tops and put the pots in a sunny location or under lights. *Darlingtonia* need lots of light to show their best colours.

The plants should remain in pure sphagnum. *Darlingtonia* grows best in loosely packed long fibered sphagnum moss. Live sphagnum moss is probably best but has to be closely watched as it can overgrow small plants. Top water the plants regularly. Larger pots will give a more stable environment. Air temperatures and humidity are not major issues as long as the roots are cool.

*Darlingtonia* plants over a year or two old need somewhat of a rest in the winter. Plants left in warm greenhouses or terrariums are subject to loss - this depends a lot on where the plants are adapted and how exactly you care for them. The plants can take being frozen solid for short periods of time. If you live where it freezes hard for a weeks at a time, the plants will need protection in a cold greenhouse, cold frame or garage.