

Sarracenia species – Pitcher Plants

The tried and true way of germinating Sarracenia seed is to cold stratify the seed for 4 weeks. Storing the seed dry in the refrigerator isn't stratification. Stratification is storing the seed in a cold and damp environment usually with natural materials that may aid the process of convincing the seed it is time to start growing. The easiest method is to refrigerate seeds in a small plastic bag with a few strands of finely chopped sphagnum moss dampened with purified water. Live sphagnum is the best choice. The moss should be wet enough so that if you squeeze it you will see water but there shouldn't be any free water in the bag. If you don't have live or dried sphagnum moss and must use peatmoss, get it very wet then squeeze it to remove most of the water and make sure there is plenty of air in the plastic bag. The seeds need air. The seeds could die if the peatmoss is too wet.

Another method is to sow the seed directly in pots and store the whole pot in a plastic bag. Stratifying seeds can be stored in a refrigerator, garage, or other location that stays around refrigerator temperature and is out of the sun.

Sow seed on finely chopped sphagnum moss or peat mix in conveniently sized pots. If you stratified the seed in a plastic bag, spread it over the medium in the pots with your planting spoon. Standard 8.5 cm pots work well. Don't bury the seed and if you have it, use live sphagnum. Chopped live sphagnum works best for germinating seeds, however live moss can over-grow the plants later so you have to keep an eye on them and trim back the moss by plucking out the growing tips or transplant the small plants to other media. If you don't have live sphagnum, use chopped dried long fibered sphagnum (chop it before adding water) or a peat mix. Place the seed about 5mm apart and use a number of pots to keep from having all the seed in one pot. Put the pots with seeds in plastic bags under florescent lights until the first signs of germination. If you leave 1 to 2cm of head space on the pot, you can use plastic wrap and a rubber band instead of plastic bags. Don't put the bags in direct sun or too close to the lights as you would end up with cooked sprouts. A temperature of 20 to 25°C is ideal. The seeds should germinate in 2 to 4 weeks.

After the seeds germinate the plastic wrap should be removed or the pots removed from the bags. Put the pots into a terrarium with some air circulation. Or if the weather is mild, just put them outside in a sunny location.