

Nepenthes

Sun: Nepenthes generally like bright light without much direct sun. About 50% sun or dappled shade is good. Plant lights often work well if they are broad spectrum and are kept just far enough away to prevent overheating or scorching. Thin, spindly plants or poor coloration are a sign of too weak a light. Sunburn usually appears as red or dead zones on the upper most growth, facing the sun or light.

Water: Do not allow Nepenthes to dry out completely. They benefit from moist media and occasional flooding to wash away any accumulated salts. Use relatively clean water such as rain, distilled or purified water. Tap water can be used in many localities if the water is low in salts. Low levels of chlorine do not seem to be a problem.

Humidity: While Nepenthes often tolerate low humidity, they usually stop making pitchers. Humid environments such as greenhouses, terrariums or even tents made from sticks and clear plastic bags can provide the needed humidity. Be sure to provide some ventilation to prevent overheating and stagnant air. Many people put their plants outdoors during warm, humid weather. Some shade must be provided and bring the plant(s) indoors before temperatures drop below 50°F.

Temperature: Most types thrive at temperatures between 55-95°F. Highland species such prefer cool nights near 55-60°F and days around 70-85°F. The lowland types are more tolerant of warmer conditions and usually are easier to grow.

Planting Mixes: There are many porous, low-fertility mixes that work. These contain tree fern fiber, chopped fir bark, long fiber sphagnum moss, peat moss and perlite. The media should be well drained and open enough so air reaches the roots. A common mix you can make yourself is long-fiber sphagnum with about 40% perlite mixed in. Combinations of the above ingredients also work well. Repot if the media breaks down, the plant dries out too quickly, or plant size indicates a bigger pot. Do not use clay pots, as salts tend to build up in them.

Feeding: If you are growing the plant where it cannot catch insects for long periods, you can add an occasional small insect such as a fly, a cockroach or a few very small insects to mature pitchers. This is not normally needed. Many types benefit from 1/8 teaspoon of Miracid™ fertilizer per quart of water, this solution should be added only to the pitchers until they are 3/4 filled.