Reflections and Suggestions from 1996

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August 1996 was an important benchmark in my ongoing experiment. Three years have passed since my creation of an outdoor carnivorous plant bog and pond. It has withstood the worst weather that this state has to throw at us. All of the plants are doing well, especially the *Darlingtonia* (no surprise here). The bog is peppered with a variety of *Pinguicula, Drosera, Sarracenia,* as well as venus flytraps. A recent discovery this September was a 15 cm high *Drosophyllum* hidden in the swamp grass: what a paradox! I have tried to grow them by the book and they died. I threw the old seed in the wet, rained-on bog and they grew! I guess the

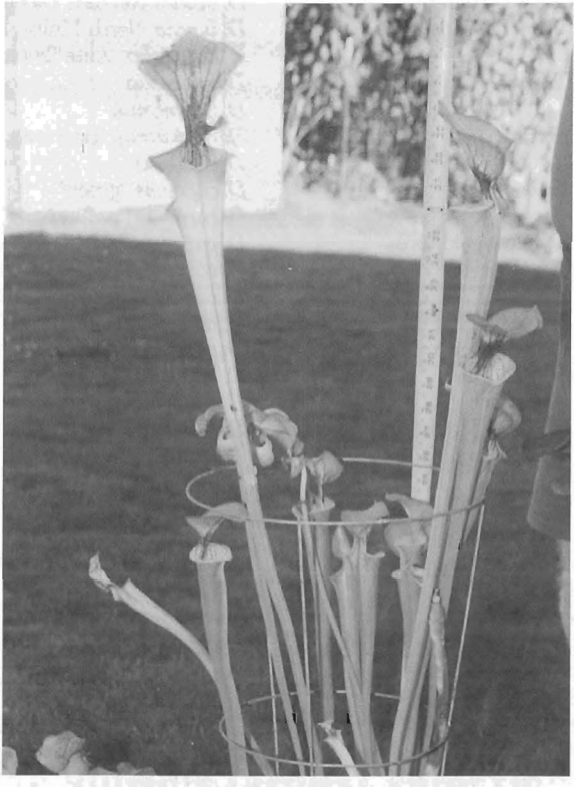

Figure 1: My 112 cm (44 inch) tall *Sarracenia flava.*

plant does not know what is best for it! The pond is loaded with *Utricularia inflata* and *U. macrorhiza.* These thriving colonies were collected from some local lakes. A good reference book on these localities can be found in Hawkeye Rondeau's publication "Carnivorous Plants of the West," to which I contributed.

The layout of my growing area may look simple; however a lot of thought, planning and effort went into this project. An open framework above the bog supports bird netting and timer-controlled misters. The water table is self-regulating. Strategically placed support bearings allow me to quickly install scaffolding. This temporary floor allows me to do my maintenance such as grooming, weeding, bug spraying and collecting seed for the ICPS seed bank. Multiple

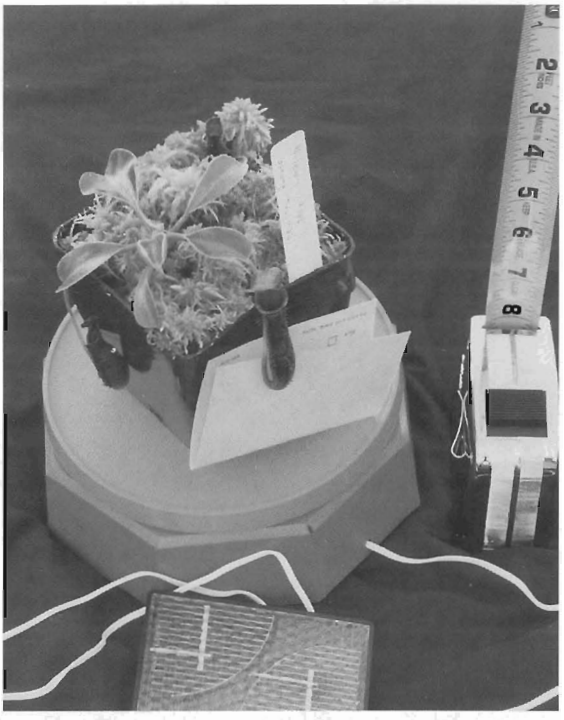

Figure 2: *N. lowii* on a solar powered turntable.

security systems surround my bog and greenhouses. (See the article written by my friend David Wong, Carniv. Pl. Newslett. 25: 10). The greenhouse that contains the majority of *Nepenthes* is on the east side of my home.

Winter in Seattle, Washington means a lot of dark skies. To augment the shorter photoperiod, I have installed full spectrum fluorescent lighting. The big difference is the tubes are free hanging and vertical, which in my opinion is more efficient and cost effective. This method distributes the light equally to the upper and lower plants, which encourages lateral growth. With the return of spring I remove the lights. It is easy to use standard 20 or 40 watt fixtures and attach extension wire to each receptacle. Add new receptacles to the wire ends and you are ready. Do not install lamps whose wattage requirements exceed the rated value of the ballast being used.

Hobbyists who wish to grow as many of their carnivorous plants as possible outdoors and unprotected will have problems with wind and rain laying low the taller plants. My solution is to support them using inexpensive, readily available tomato cages. You can cut the cages to different heights to meet your requirements. The system provides 360^{o} support. (Figure 1). Warning! File or grind off the cut ends as they are often razor sharp and could inflict nasty wounds.

Horticulturists tell us uniform lighting promotes uniform growth, which means turning our potted plants periodically. A good solution was found when I discovered a solar powered turntable by "Sunmate" at a local nature shop, list price $16. I bought the last one in that shop for $5. I would have bought ten of them at that price if available. The table is capable of supporting 30 pounds. The rotation speed varies with lighting conditions, one revolution takes two to three minutes. My highly prized *N. lowii* I acquired from Andreas Wistuba in 1994 gets exclusive use of this device (Figure 2). One of the most eye catching plants displayed at our Pacific Northwest meeting held in June was my gorgeous 80 cm tall red tubed *S. flava*. Occasionally, one receives a rare unexpected surprise in growing carnivorous plants. The surprise this year came from a *S. rubra*. It has a functional two headed pitcher on a single stalk (Figure 3, p120). Shortly after photographing this specimen, I removed the oddity and dried it in a high vacuum. It is now on display in my hobby room under a bell jar.

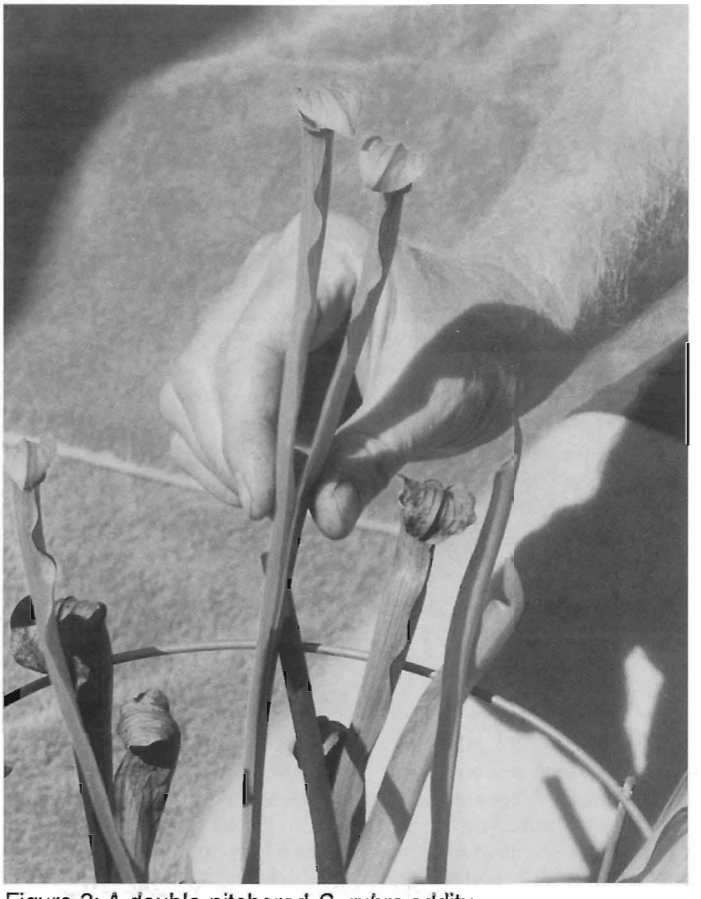

Figure 3: A double-pitchered *S. rubra* oddity.