

Asian Pitcher Plant

Nepenthes spp.

The Asian Pitcher Plant is a member of *Nepenthes*, a genus of around 150 species that can be found wild throughout South China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Australia. Most are vines, but some remain compact in habit. The name "monkey cups" refers to the fact that monkeys have been observed drinking rainwater from these plants. Surprisingly, the vast majority of *Nepenthes* are easy to grow in cultivation and will easily adapt to most homes.

USDA Zone: 10



Where to Grow

No terrarium is required for most varieties. Grow your plant close to a bright, sunny window. You may grow it outdoors when the temperature is consistently above 40°F at night. After situating the plant where it is to grow, add a little water to the pitchers, about 1/2- 3/4 inch. This helps the plant avoid dehydration while it adjusts to a new environment.

Sunlight

An ideal location is a window that gets four or more hours of direct sunlight and very bright filtered sun during the rest of the day. Their leaves will darken a bit when grown in sunlight. Regardless of the species, avoid full shade.

Artificial Lights

If a sunny window is not possible, use a couple of cool white 40w fluorescent tubes or compact bulbs, plant-specific grow lights, or the LED equivalents. Keep the light source around 8 inches above the plant. The light should be on for 14 hours during spring and summer, and 12 hours during fall and winter. An outlet timer is a worry-free way to ensure that your plant gets enough light! Avoid using incandescent bulbs as they produce too much heat and are the wrong light spectrum.

Water

Keep the soil moist at all times, but avoid keeping it in standing water, which will quickly cause root rot. Unlike other carnivorous plants, *Nepenthes* will tolerate hard water (up to 200 parts per million) with almost no adverse effects. Make sure the water drains through the soil completely. Tap water is fine, but filtered or rainwater is ideal.

Temperature

Nearly all species of *Nepenthes* prefer daytime temperatures of 65°F – 80°F. Protect your plant from temperatures below 40°F.

Feeding

Although some growers like to feed their pitcher plants, it is not necessary. Insects live in most homes, and they will naturally be attracted to your plant. Keep in mind that carnivorous plants have adapted to survive on miniscule amounts of nutrients. An adult plant needs only a couple of insects per month. If you choose to feed your plant, use recently killed insects that will fit comfortably in the pitchers. Avoid putting too much inside because the pitchers will rot. Do not feed your plant meat. Use insects only. Feeding is not required during winter months when growth naturally slows down.

If you prefer, you may spray your plant with a weak solution of fertilizer. Use a high quality Orchid or Bromeliad fertilizer, and use only ¼ to ½ teaspoon of fertilizer per gallon of water. Mist your plant with this mixture. Apply weekly during the spring and summer, and only once per month or not at all during the winter when growth is naturally slow. When it comes to feeding or fertilizing your plants, it is very tempting to over do it. Keep in mind that ***none is better than too much.***

Soil

Fortunately, *Nepenthes* adapts well to a wide range of soil mixes. Many growers have their own secret recipe, but as long as the soil is relatively low in nutrients and provides excellent drainage and aeration, whatever mix you create will be just fine. A popular mix is 1 part dried sphagnum moss and 1 part perlite, pumice or expanded shale. You can also use 1 part peat moss, 1 part perlite and 1 part silica sand.

Repotting

For robust plants, repot yearly. Change the soil, and if necessary, use a larger pot. Changing the soil improves root aeration and strengthens the health of your plants. Repotting can be done at any time of the year. *Nepenthes* roots are thin and black, and very delicate, so take extra care when repotting.

