

Growing Asclepiad Seed – Including Stapelia, Orbea, Huernia, Caralluma, Ceropegia, Angolluma, Tavaresia and Hoodia

Asclepiad seed is amongst the fastest germinating seed there is. Some varieties will start to germinate in less than 24 hours (Hoodia) and most do so within a few days.

There are a few simple rules and precautions to follow when sowing this seed.

The golden rule is cleanliness. Almost more than any other type of seed I know, Asclepiad seed suffers from fungal infections. To combat this scrupulous cleanliness is necessary. Sterile soil is recommended, I sterilise mine in the microwave (always goes down well!). Watering with Chinosol or a copper based fungicide also helps.

Sow the seed on the surface of sterile compost, the type you would use for cactus i.e. gritty. Spray gently to settle in using a fungicide solution as mentioned above and seal in a plastic bag and place somewhere warm (25 - 30 Deg C) but do not exclude light. I use a propagator and would thoroughly recommend the use of one when germinating this seed.

As stated earlier the seed should germinate quickly. Once the seeds have germinated move the pot to slightly cooler conditions, but keep it sealed for now. The seedlings will look like nothing you have ever seen before (unless you routinely grow Asclepiads), eventually from between the 2 seed leaves, the leafless stem will push out. Once this happens you can open the bag to admit some air. Do not over water; conversely do not allow the plants to dry out too much.

By the end of the first growing season your plants might be anything up to 5cm tall or more. When potting on use open gritty compost and a pot that is slightly bigger than the last one.

Flowering can occur from 2 years on. The plants only flower on new growth (1 year old stems or younger), so plants that have not grown in the previous 12 months, probably wont flower.

Despite their succulence, they are often described as repressed tropical plants. To this end, providing they are in an open mix, they can be fairly freely watered during the growing season. The important thing is to start of watering in spring, slowly and gently, lest you lose the plant to rot whilst it is recovering from losing most of its roots in winter. If you see new growth, then this is a sign that the roots are there doing their job and you can water with a less restrained hand. Plants treated in this way can make phenomenal amounts of growth in the season and flower away endlessly.

For more info on these fascinating plants see <http://www.cactus-mall.com/ias> or <http://www.asclepius.de> where you will find a whole host of links and resources.

Good growing!

For Edithcole and Stephanotis see the next page for some specifics that need to be taken into account when growing these stunning species

Edithcolea grandis

Growing Edithcolea is fairly easy providing you follow these few golden rules:

1. Temperature – not below 15 Deg C in the winter – EVER.
2. Watering – only when dry, during Late April – Late September and NEVER when it is cool.
3. Soil – very open mix at least 50% grit, possibly more.
4. Feed – Two to three times a season (May, June/July, August – and that's it!)
5. Light – Bright light as seedlings – once they're older they can take some full sun – they naturally grow underneath other shrubs and succulents in habitat, so these provide shade.
6. Propagation – can be from cuttings but this is hard and not for the feint hearted as you are likely to fail more times than you succeed – best growing from seed.

Follow these rules and you will be rewarded with healthy plants and beautiful flowers. Pictures can never do justice to these gorgeous flowers and until you have seen one in the flesh you cannot truly appreciate just how beautiful they are.

Stephanotis floribunda

This stunning tropical requires a little different care from the above.

They need to be covered with a fine layer of the seed mix.

They take around 4 to 8 weeks to come up.

They need to be potted on once they reach the four leaf stage and growing in bright (not direct sun) light.

Do not turn them too often, the leaves and buds will turn to the incident light very quickly and this may cause issues if they are turned when the light is from a window (ie from one side only).