JUDITH FINN ON GROWING Pinguicula laueana

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Early in 1998 I had the pleasure of discussing carnivores with Judith Finn, horticulturist at Berkeley Botanical Gardens. I was most interested in how she grows her marvelous specimens of Pinguicula laueana. Look at the front cover to see why I am so entranced by this plant!

CPN: I’ve seen the Pinguicula laueana you grow at Berkeley. It is marvelous.
JF: Yes, the red flowers are really nice. Pinguicula laueana flowers for about seven months of the year; it’s a long bloomer. The foliage is also red and very pretty.
CPN: I see you have them in clay pots. What kind of soil do you use?
JF: I like to use a fine, well-drained mix of sand, peat, and fine pumice or perlite, in a 1:1:1 ratio. Live Sphagnum is pretty, but it can overgrow the Pinguicula.
CPN: How do you water it?
JF: Keep the soil just moist year-round. Pinguicula laueana is shallow-rooted, but you should use a tall pot. This way, during the winter the pot wicks up water but the plant doesn’t sit in water all the time. During the summer it can stay in a saucer of water. Use purified water like rainwater or from reverse osmosis.

Figure 1: P. laueana, photograph by B. Meyers Rice.
Figure 2: P. laueana, photograph by E.M. Salvia.
CPN: You grow your plants in a greenhouse in the San Francisco Bay area, which is generally foggy. Do you need any extra lighting?
JF: This doesn't seem to be too important—we get moderately high light during the summer. During the winter it's more important to supplement the lighting. I use fluorescent bulbs.
CPN: Does this species go dormant?
JF: No, it doesn't seem to go dormant so much as it gets the winter doldrums when the evening temperatures cool down to 55°F (13°C). During the winter it loves temperatures in the 50—60°F (10—16°C) range, but will stand 50—80°F (10—27°C). During the summer it likes 70—80°F (21—27°C), but will take 60—100°F (16—38°C).
CPN: Do you fertilize these? Peter D'Amato accidentally fertilized his with Miracid and ended up killing them (see issue 27:4)!
JF: No fertilizer. Sometimes I give them a little dolomite—lime, that is—or oyster shells. Maybe about a teaspoon (5 cm³) in a cup of water (250 ml) is enough for a few plants. It also helps keep the Sphagnum down, which like I said can crowd the plant.
CPN: Do you have any tips on propagation?
JF: I haven't gotten around to pollinating these, but divisions or leaf cuttings work well. For leaf cuttings, I use summer leaves tucked in live Sphagnum.
CPN: Well, you are doing a great job. Do you have any other tricks?
JF: This isn't an exact science! I just grow it like P. moranensis and it is alive and happy. It is in the same room as some Sarracenia, and they are doing alright. It never has had pest problems. It's a good plant.

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