

Nepenthes Eymai

By

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There is some controversy over the name of this *Nepenthes* species due to problems common in nomenclature, which we won't enter into here. Briefly, this plant was discovered in 1938 by P.J. Eyma in the mountains of central Sulawesi, but it remained on herbarium sheets until "rediscovered" by John Turnbull and Ann Middleton, and also by Shigeo Kurata, in 1983. The plant is also known as *N. infundibuliformis*, the name given it by Turnbull and Middleton, but Kurata's *N. eymai* seems to now be the accepted epithet. This is one of three plants "rediscovered" by the above mentioned parties. The other two are the equally spectacular, *N. glabratus* and *N. hamatus* (named respectively *N. rubra-maculata* and *N. dentata* by Mr. Kurata).

Nepenthes eymai is a highland variety of the tropical pitcher plant and grows well in conditions for other highlanders, such as *N. fusca* and *N. maxima*, both of which are close relatives of *N. eymai*. I have grown this plant for some six or seven years. It did well for a couple of years as a terrarium plant under lights while in rosette form. The lower pitchers look similar to its above mentioned cousins, but the peristome is more pronounced at the neck, and is striped in the forefront, darkening to a reddish brown where the peristome meets the upwardly inclined triangular lid. The lid has the hook-shaped glandular crest at its base, and a filiform appendage "tooth" at its tip. The wings are prominent. The fuzzy lower pitcher is yellow-brown with reddish-brown blotches and is rather squat.

However it is the miniature upper pitchers that are its hallmark. The plant produces strong climbing vines with evenly spaced leaves alternating left and right. The dainty, fuzzy, funnel-shaped upper pitchers are yellow-green and have a perfectly circular mouth with a narrow, flat, striped peristome. The lid is very narrow and has the prominent glandular appendages of the lower pitchers. There is a significant bulge below the lip, and the pitcher quickly narrows to a rather thick, hollow tube where fluids accumulate before narrowing into the tendril. The trapping mechanism is interesting. Unless flooded by rainwater to the brim, insects seem to fall and get stuck on the sticky inner walls of the pitcher. The secreted digestive juices generally accumulate in the narrow, lower part of the pitcher. Thus insects are not drowned as in most other *Nepenthes*. No doubt the narrow lid allows rainwater to quickly fill the trap to the peristome, and this may aid in the capture rates. I have noticed that even when the plant is crawling with ants, the lower pitchers do a better job at capture than the upper ones.

I grow *N. eymai* successfully in an airy, loose mix of a little bit of everything: orchid bark, lava rock, perlite, vermiculite, osmunda fiber, charcoal, and some long-fiber sphagnum - my typical *Nepenthes* mix. It grows in the greenhouse in a sunny location, with temperatures chilly at night (50 °F. on average) and warm during the day (80 °F). *N. eymai* has done well with occasional winter night temperatures down to 40 °F. and briefly up to 90 °F. on summer afternoons. It strikes with fair regularity from stem cuttings. Like most *Nepenthes* it seems to benefit from occasional fertilizing, being regularly watered with reverse-osmosis water that is quickly drained from the wooden planter box it grows in. I would suggest to those growing it that *N. eymai* be given plenty of room and minimal pruning, so that its climbing stems may grow many feet upwards, showing off its beautiful and strange little pitchers.