

Cephalotus 'Eden Black'

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Introduction

I have been growing *Cephalotus follicularis* from seed for over 20 years. This is not an activity to be taken lightly, as it takes at least 10-15 years for a plant to reach maturity under my normal greenhouse conditions. Of the many plants I have raised from seed during this time, only one has shown particular promise and is worthy of wider distribution and cultivar status.

Origins

This particular plant originated from one of my very first attempts at growing *Cephalotus* from seed. During the mid-1980s I bought my first *Cephalotus* plant (which I still have), which is a normal plant in all regards with average-sized pitchers 3-4 cm in length, red-coloured in full sun and of useful, vigorous, rapidly clumping habit (my so-called "vigorous clumping" clone). Shortly afterwards, I was given a superb, large-pitched and darkly coloured clone by Dudley Watts (to whom I am eternally grateful); I now affectionately know this plant as my "Dudley Watts" clone and it is a proven good grower of larger-than-average size and dark pitchers, with pitchers of about 5 cm in my growing conditions. Both of these plants were used to produce seed and I regularly cross-pollinated the two. For a few years during the late 1980s I produced several batches of seed, many of which were sent to the CPS seed bank and others which I sowed and grew on myself. From the resultant seedlings I selected and kept two of the best, most vigorous plants. Both of these plants were unique, but unfortunately only one of the plants survived over the years...but what a plant! It is impossible to say whether this plant was the result of a cross or self pollination, but it certainly seems to possess characteristics of both potential parents.



Figure 1 – Fully coloured pitcher of 'Eden Black'

Characteristics

The most notable characteristic of this cultivar is the darkly coloured pitchers. I refer to them as black, which is possibly what some might call artistic licence, but they are certainly at least as black as many darkly coloured plants of popular garden plant species given the same description; they are probably best described as dark purple. I find it almost impossible to capture accurately the colour in any photograph, although photos do give an impression of the colour, hence I will refer to colour using standard colours from the RHS colour chart. To be specific they correspond to the RHS mini colour chart colour RHS 200A (dark brown) when fully coloured. See Figure 1 which shows a fully coloured pitcher. In contrast, my "Dudley Watts" clone has pitcher colour corresponding to RHS 187A (dark purple brown). The peristome of 'Eden Black' darkens quickly in full sun and the rest of the pitcher follows suit, with the pitcher eventually assuming virtually the same colour as the peristome; this is unlike any other *Cephalotus* I grow, where the pitchers are usually a hue lighter than the peristome. The dark colour spreads to both the outer and inner surfaces of the lid, even suffusing the windows with colour. The inner collar of the pitcher also becomes a dull purple colour in parts.

The pitchers are on the large side, and are at least as big as my "Dudley Watts" pitchers at 5 cm, although they are getting bigger every year; the plant produced flower buds in 2005 for the first time, but is possibly not yet fully mature. The pitchers are elegant, long, relatively smooth and more-or-less straight-sided, lacking very crinkly pitchers characterising some of the clones available in cultivation. They have a well-formed peristome and a wide mouth; here they differ from the "Dudley Watts" clone which is noticeably constricted towards the mouth with a chunky, thickened peristome. The plant is rather shy in producing non-carnivorous leaves, a trait it shares with my "vigorous clumping" clone, which is a super characteristic for the grower but not terribly conducive to propagation from leaf cuttings (non-carnivorous leaves are usually easier to root)!

This cultivar requires good light to produce optimum colouration and all my plants are grown in a cool greenhouse receiving full sun all day with no shading, apart from bubble plastic. Temperatures are in the range of 5°C-35°C. I suspect the pitchers may reach an even darker colour under higher light intensity than I get here in Yorkshire. In contrast, they would probably be larger but not so highly coloured under shadier growing conditions. I do not believe that the dark colour is attributable to unique growing conditions as the plant is grown alongside seven other different clones in identical pots and compost and these plants never develop the intense dark colouration. See Figure 2 which shows 'Eden Black' growing alongside my "Dudley Watts" and "vigorous clumping" *Cephalotus* clones for comparison.

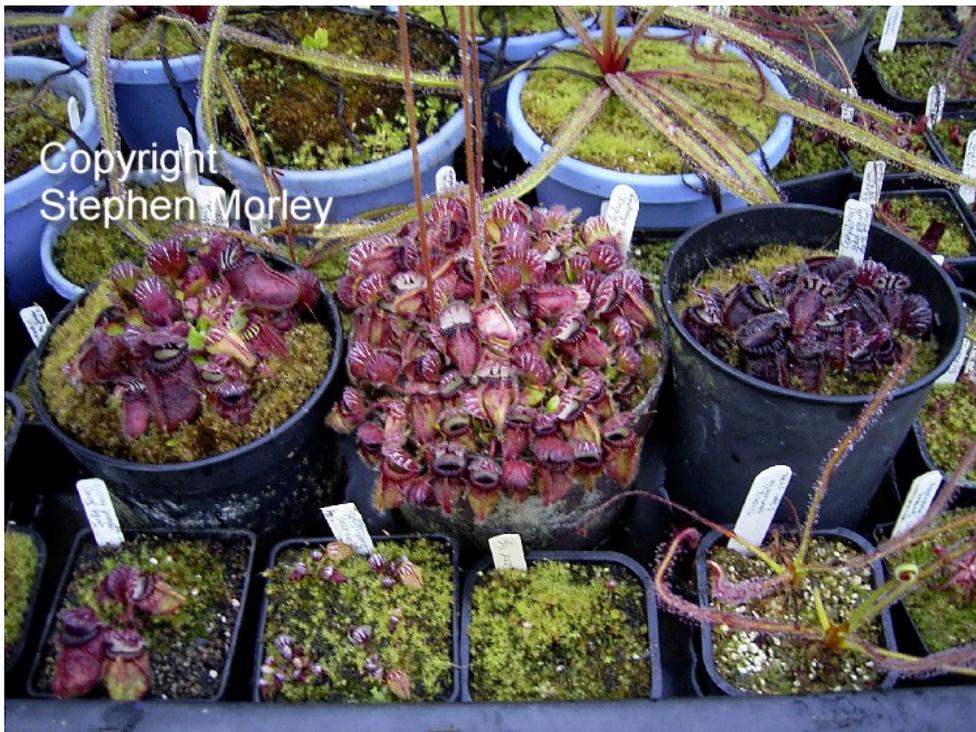


Figure 2 - Comparative photograph with my “Dudley Watts” clone on the left, normal “vigorous clumping” clone in the middle and ‘Eden Black’ on the right, all grown in identical pots, growing media and lighting conditions. Pot size is 13.5cm.

Cultivation

The plant is as easy to grow as any other *Cephalotus*. I grow my plants in a mixture of approximately 1:1 peat substitute: perlite in relatively deep rose pots. In common with some dark-coloured *Sarracenia* clones the intense, dark colour may take a while to recover following repotting or other stressful incidents. During a rather careless crown-lifting exercise in the spring of 2006 I accidentally split my only plant into several pieces. Quite fortuitous I suppose, as it lessens the risk of an individual catastrophic loss. I also managed to root a few pitcher leaves and have distributed some of these to other growers in Britain and Europe. To preserve the unique characteristics of the plant it should only be propagated vegetatively via leaf or rhizome cuttings, or by division.

Etymology

The cultivar is proposed as *Cephalotus* 'Eden Black'. The name refers both to my house name as well as the dark colour of the pitchers.

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