Instructions: Caring for Pitcher Plants (Nepenthes alata)

Upon seeing pitcher plants, the most commonly asked question is “What is that?!” It’s an extremely unique looking and beautiful carnivorous tropical plant. The common name, pitcher plant, comes from the pitcher shaped swollen mid-vein of the leaf. Insects are attracted to the plant, land on the slippery lip, and fall into the digestive liquid within the pitchers. Surprisingly little effort is required to successfully grow these exotic plants in your home!

**Light** – Pitcher plants prefer bright light and would thrive in a sunny window. Bright, indirect light is optimal but Nepenthes alata can tolerate bright to medium light as well. Humidity is important for pitcher plants, but the very adaptive Nepenthes alata requires less than other varieties of Nepenthes. Approximately 50-75% humidity would be ideal. Misting the plant will help to increase humidity. Plants are more likely to provide pitchers if given higher humidity.

**Water** – Pitcher plants like well draining soil, kept moist at all times. Don’t allow the soil to dry out. Distilled or naturally collected rainwater is ideal when watering, but tap water is acceptable for pitcher plants, as they are more adaptable than the majority of carnivorous plants.

**Fertilizer** - Pitcher plants naturally grow in nutrient poor soil, so fertilization is not necessary but certainly helps since most homes don't have an abundance of insects for the plants to attract. Using a ¼ strength diluted fertilizer once a month is recommended, make sure not to over fertilize as this will kill your plant. Fertilize the top of the plants, make sure not to fill the pitchers with fertilizer. Pitcher plants can be hand fed insects (flies, spiders, etc.) infrequently if you desire. Carefully placing them in the pitchers with tweezers is the most effective method of feeding.

**Notes** – Once you plant is settled in at home, you should fill each pitcher with ½ to 1 inch of distilled water (In shipping and transport the naturally produced digestive liquid is often spilled out.). After that initial filling, the pitcher will produce it's own liquid. Mature pitchers will begin to brown and shrivel from the top of the pitcher down. Partially browned, shriveled pitchers are still functional and beneficial to the plant and should only be removed once completely shriveled. Trim them off at the tip of the leaf. New pitchers will be produced on new growth at the tip of young leaves.