

San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

Succulent of the Month October 2003 - *Lithops*

Lithops are the most remarkable of all the succulent plants. At a gross level, they are very simple. All you get are two leaves, each mostly filled with water holding cells. They are dormant when the weather is too hot or too cold, and grow most in the spring.



Lithops lesliei C343

On a fine level, no other genus has such a wealth of variation in color, shape, texture and pattern. (except maybe *Conophytum*).



Lithops bromfieldii C348

There are a little less than 60 species, about 800 known local variations of the species, and a few hundred named and unnamed cultivars.



Lithops dorotheae

No two *Lithops* plants look the same, yet a knowledgeable grower can identify most species.



Lithops karasmontana "mickbergensis" C169

There are as many successful ways of growing *Lithops* as there are growers, and the cultivation practices are modified to fit individual habits, and local microclimates. The basic cultivation routine is: Stop watering after flowering, or at the end of November, except for *L. optica* which needs water until the end of December. Start watering after the old leaves are completely dry. (Usually late March or Early April) Water freely during the summer. Grow them in an open, fast draining mix. Most growers use at least 50% pumice, some sand, and little organic material. Keep peat out

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of the mix. Some good growers fertilize frequently, some hardly ever. Keep them dry during the winter.



Lithops marmorata

Lithops are small, they don't take up much room. They are easy to grow from seed, with seed planting best in either October or April. There are good growers who do it both ways, and some who do it both times.



***Lithops fulviceps* 'Bismark'**



***Lithops fulviceps* C266**

Because they are small and inexpensive, it's best to grow them in quantity. Most of the people who can't grow Lithops, have killed a few one by one. They are best grown by the dozen.



***Lithops hallii* C176**

Even the best growers have plants that mysteriously dry up, or leave during the night.

Tom Glavich

September 2003