

NATIVE TERRESTRIAL CULTURE

General:

The hints below relate mainly to colony and non colony forming species within the *Pterostylis* group but can be applied to several other genera. When considering purchasing native terrestrials, ensure your plants are from a reliable and reputable source. Intending growers must be aware many species originate from dryer inland areas and different soil types requiring more careful watering to reduce the possibility of tuber rot. Terrestrials flower at various times during the year but all have the habit of producing new tubers for the following season by the time flowering time has finished. For this reason it is helpful to continue watering until the flowers and stem have withered and become dormant.

Pots:

Pots usually suited to smaller *Cymbidiums* will also suit terrestrials. These pots of 140-150 mm will accommodate up to 25 tubers of all species within the *Pterostylis* group. Those species such as *Diuris* and *Cryptostylis* which often have long, slender tubers will require a larger and deeper pot as some tubers will be longer than the width of the pot.

Potting Mix:

For the wider *Pterostylis* group, use a base mix of 50% indoor plant potting mix which does not contain water crystals or fertiliser. To this add 50% propagating sand. For those terrestrials from dry areas, use 75% sand. Experience with a range of species and the growing methods of each owner will determine more precise and varied combinations of potting-mix.

Potting method:

To divide terrestrials upturn the pot into a sieve and sieve out all old potting-mix. Do not wash off any mix attached to the tubers as this contains good fungi beneficial to plant health. As almost all terrestrials are deciduous re-potting is carried out in late December or early January when plants are dormant. Plants should be allowed to dry out completely before re-potting occurs. On the bottom all pots I place a section of fly screen, cut to the shape of the pot, high enough to cover the drain holes. This restricts easy access to the tubers by wood slaters and worms. On top of this I add cubes of chopped styrene foam to a depth of 25 mm. These cubes can be between 15-20 mm. This will ensure tubers do not stay wet as most species prefer to stay slightly moist during their growing period. On top of the foam the selected potting-mix (dampened) is added to a depth of 50 mm from the top of the pot. Tubers are then placed at even intervals over the mix and covered to a depth of 50 mm. When this is complete cover the mix with a 2 mm layer of Casuarina needles. This will minimise soil erosion when watering and retain humidity. All tubers have an eye which denotes the top of the tuber, from which the stem emerges. Ideally this should be at the top when potting. When placing tubers horizontally, ensure the eye of all tubers are not on one side of the pot. They should be placed opposite each other, away from the edge of the pot. This can be done by placing tubers in the potting-mix at an angle and applies to *Diuris* and similar species. To avoid breaking slender tubers they can be placed in a hole bored in the potting-mix with a narrow stake.

Water:

After potting in the dampened mix, do not water until green shoots emerge in late summer to early autumn then water fortnightly until stems appear and increase to weekly until flowering is finished.

