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Roridula gorgonias | Plantz Africa

Introduction

Roridula gorgonias with its beautiful pink flowers and sticky leaves certainly captures the attention of many. Its peculiar relationship with the assassin bug, *Pameridia*, is definitely one which will spark an interest in any carnivorous plant grower.



Description

Description

Roridula gorgonias is a perennial shrub, up to 1 m or more. The simple, narrow, alternate leaves, up to 120 mm long, are crowded at the tips of the branches. They are covered with sticky hairs, which catch many small insects and occasionally, they trap large insects such as wasps and bees.



Roridulas have both male and female reproductive organs. The pink flowers which are 20 mm in diameter, appear from July to October (winter-spring). The seed capsule is not fleshy and once it reaches maturity, the seeds are released.

Conservation Status

Status

Roridula gorgonias as well as *R. dentata* are endemic to the Cape Fynbos area in Western Cape. They are not listed as rare and endangered, but due to a small distribution range, the effects of agriculture and too frequent fires, it is likely that they may be added to the Red Data List in the future.

Distribution and habitat

Distribution description

Roridula gorgonias is an endemic and is found in the mountainous areas, at an altitude of 155-915 m, growing in the cooler, damp places, from Somerset West to Swellendam.

Derivation of name and historical aspects

History

The genus name *Roridula* is derived from the Latin word *roridus*, meaning dewy, since the leaves appear to be covered with fine dewdrops. The species name is thought to be derived from the Greek word *gorgon*, meaning terrible. In Greek mythology, gorgon refers to the three sisters Stheno, Euryale and the Mortal Medusa who had snakes for hair and if anyone attempted to look at them, would be turned to stone.

Roridula is the only genus in the family Roridulaceae, in which *R. gorgonias* and *R. dentata* are the only two species.

Ecology

Ecology

The *Roridula* plant and the assassin bug, *Pameridea roridulae*, live in symbiosis. The sticky sap on the leaves of *Roridula* contains no digestive enzymes. This sap traps insects which are eaten by the assassin bug and in turn; the excretions of the bug are absorbed by the plant through its leaves. The sticky plant serves as a protective home for these assassin bugs, which can move freely over the sticky hairs. The juvenile assassin bugs as well as bees help to pollinate the flowers.

Uses

Use

For growers all over the world, especially those wanting to add to their carnivorous plant collection, this plant is of much interest. It is used as a pot plant and can be displayed on a window sill or a well-aerated balcony in a sunny position.

Growing Roridula gorgonias

Grow

It is best to grow *Roridula gorgonias* by seed since seedlings will produce stronger plants. These plants are treated very much like fynbos plants such as ericas. Treat the seeds with the Kirstenbosch Smoke Primer and sow on a well-drained sandy mix of 50 % sand or silica grit and 50 %



peat. The seeds must be kept moist but not wet. It will take approximately one month for the seeds to germinate. The seedlings can be pricked out but late germination does occur, so allow more time for the remaining seeds to germinate. When pricking out the seedlings, do not disturb the roots. Pot them into small pots, using the same mix of sand or silica grit and peat. The watering remains the same.

Roridula gorgonias can be propagated by tip or stem cuttings. Place the cuttings in a sand or peat medium

after having dipped the freshly cut ends of the stems in a rooting hormone. To increase the humidity, cover the tray with a plastic cover. The use of bottom heating increases the rooting percentage. Once the cuttings have rooted and had a week to harden off, pot them into the same mix as used for the seedlings. Place the plants in a sunny, well-aerated area.

It is not recommended to use any fertilizers, insecticides or fungicides on these plants since roridulas are very sensitive. If assassin bugs, which help with the feeding of these plants, cannot be found, then try a very weak foliar feed high in nitrogen.

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Credits

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Roridula gorgonias is a carnivorous shrub-like plant native to the cape of South Africa. Unlike other types of carnivorous plants that produce water-based dew secretions, *R. gorgonias* produces an extremely sticky resin-based dew that won't rinse off in the rain. *R. gorgonias* cannot digest trapped bugs directly for nutrients and instead relies on a symbiotic relationship with a local species of assassin bug. The bugs are specially adapted to navigate the sticky tentacles of *Roridula*, eating other trapped insects and in turn fertilizing the plant by leaving their droppings on the leaf surfaces. The two species of *Roridula*—*R. dentata* and *R. gorgonias*—are among the most impressive of carnivorous plants, eventually becoming shrubs up to two meters high, with lovely pink flowers, and tufts of hairy, sticky leaves that are reported to snare the occasional bird in the plant's South African habitat. They are also among the most recalcitrant of carnivores in cultivation, recommended only for experienced growers, especially those with access to an airy greenhouse that gets brilliant sun (or who live in the Cederberge, in South Africa). The first hurdle to overcome for would-be *Roridula* grower *Roridula gorgonias* Planch. is an accepted name. This name is the accepted name of a species in the genus *Roridula* (family Roridulaceae). The record derives from Tropicos (data supplied on 2012-04-18) which reports it as an accepted name (record 5900576) with original publication details: Ann. Sci. Nat., Bot., sér. 3, 9: 307 1848 . Full publication details for this name can be found in IPNI: <http://ipni.org/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:322011-1>. Synonyms *Roridula* (/rɒˈrɪdʒɪˈdʒɪ/; from Latin *roridus* "dewy") is a genus of evergreen, insect-trapping shrubs, with two species, of about 1–2 m (4–6 ft). It is the only genus in the family Roridulaceae. It has thin, woody, shyly branching, upright, initially brown, later grey stems, with lance- to awl-shaped leaves crowded at their tips. The star-symmetrical flowers consist from the outside in of five, green or reddish, free sepals, alternating with five white, pink or purple, free petals. Further to the *Roridula gorgonias* Planch., no saccharides have been detected. The consistency, similar to a sticky syrup, is caused by a mixture of triterpenoids, as major components, and acylglycerides. However, the composition of an insoluble residue still remains unclear. Based on the conspicuous number, size and mass of trapped insects, the very viscid secretion of *Roridula* is believed to be the strongest glue among all insect-trapping plants (Marloth, 1910 ; Hartmeyer, 1998 ; Barthlott et al., 2004). For *R. gorgonias* , we previously measured the pull-off force of secretion droplets in tentacle-shap