



Weird and Wacky Plants

Melissa King 31/03/10

The Turtleback or Elephants Foot Plant (*Dioscorea elephantipes*)

- It has a swollen trunk that resembles a turtle's back or elephant's foot.
- The base of the trunk can become massive with age - spreads to a metre or more across.
- There is quite a contrast between the lush green foliage and the misshapen scarred looking trunk base.
- It does all of it is growing through the winter then dies back in summer – so it takes a rest during the hot dry summer.
- It can live for up to 70 years in cultivation
- Grow outside in morning sun. Protect from frost.
- Native to Southern Africa



The Brain Cactus (*Mammillaria elongata Cistata*)

- Slow growing succulent
- Will reach 10-15 cm across in 5-10 years
- Grow it in a cacti or succulent mix only
- Grow it in a pot indoors in a sunny position. Perfect window sill plant
- Must be kept out of the rain
- Low maintenance and dry tolerant. Water when dry in summer and not in winter.
- Not known to flower
- Plants may be kept in small pots for many years



Pitcher Plants or Monkey Cups - *Nepenthes*

- Tropical and subtropical Insect eating plants. They produce amazing insect catching traps on the end of each leaf tip.
- They use pretty colours, sugary nectar and sweet scents to lure their pray.
- Many nepenthes can be grown as indoor plants on sunny window sills. In warmer climates they can make suitable patio plants year round.
- In dry climates humidity can be provided by frequent spraying with pure water.
- They appreciate frequent watering and the soil should never be allowed to become dry.
- In the wild they supplement their diet with insect prey
- Growers prefer to feed insects to the pitchers by hand, but they can be given artificial fertilizers.
- Depending on the species individual pitchers may last anywhere from 3-6 months. Don't trim them off until they are completely brown.



- Monkeys have been seen drinking rainwater from these cups, hence the common name.

The Sensitive Plant (*Mimosa pudica*)

- Grow it as an indoor plant in cooler climates for its curiosity value.
- It's native to South and Central America. **Warning it's a serious weed in warmer areas!**
- The leaves fold inward and droop when you touch it. Then they re-open after a couple of minutes.
- It's believed that the plant uses this ability to defend itself from predators – either to scare or shake off harmful insects.



Toad plant (*Huernia hystrix*)

- A spiky succulent to 15 cm tall
- Unusual maroon-tan coloured flowers
- The flowers stink like rotten meat to attract pollinators
- Dry tolerant plant perfect for pots.
- Native to South Africa
- Grow them in bright shade in a greenhouse or in warm climates they can be grown outdoors in the shade.
- Keep plants dry in winter

