NATIVE TERRESTRIAL CULTURE

General: Most native terrestrial orchids are quite easy to grow and as with other species a little general habitat knowledge will prove beneficial. Beginners are advised to start with the easier to grow Pterostylis and Diuris. These are obtained from Nesbitts Orchids or from other terrestrial growers.

Growth Habit: Most native terrestrials are deciduous and thus enjoy a different growth pattern to epiphytic orchids. After flowering, plants will die back with nothing visible above the surface of the mix. However, well before this time new tuberoids for next years' growth will have been produced.

Pots&Potting: This is one genus which can be over-potted without worry. I generally use 125mm-140mm squat pots for most genera but as Diuris tuberoids can be rather long (occasionally over 150mm) I prefer much deeper pots, although these tuberoids can be placed horizontally instead of vertically. First place a piece of old fly screen or shade cloth on the bottom of the pot. This will prevent pests from accessing the pot via the drain holes. Pterostylis, small Caladenias and others similar can be potted to a depth of 25mm-30mm but taller growing types such as Diuris can be potted up to a depth of 50mm. Pterostylis and Diuris are usually positioned equidistant around the pot but Caladenias prefer to be placed in the centre of the pot close together. A 140mm pot can accommodate up to 24 tuberoids of any Pterostylis type but remember the new tuberoids of many genera will gravitate to the edge of the pot, Pterostylis in particular. This is why most Pterostylis are re-potted each year. Re-potting should be finished by the end of the second week in January. This is because some plants can flower well before Easter and handling tuberoids with new shoots attached requires a delicate touch. Corybas require a different approach as they grow well in a terrarium atmosphere. This means they are potted as others but have a lid of clear plastic placed over the pot. This can be a circular take-away food container, cut-off milk container or plastic bag fitted closely around the pot. To re-pot, upturn the pot into a sieve of 3mm-5mm and re-pot similar sized tuberoids to enable (hopefully) plants of a similar height.

Potting-Mix: A good general-purpose mix would contain equal parts coarse sand and indoor plant type potting mix, 20% peat moss and 20% composted leaf mould. For most Pterostylis this is sufficient but remember species such as *Ptst. baptistii* are usually found in depressions where moisture is normally apparent while others such as *Ptst. grandiflora* often grow in heavy leaf mulch. The former would require a slightly heavier mix and the latter more leaf matter. Diuris and Caladenia along with many others require a better draining mix. This is where habitat knowledge is of some help. These mixes are satisfactory if plants are grown under fibre glass but if grown under shade cloth then use more sand or a fine gravel. When a suitable potting-mix is eventually found, ensure the components are available each year to retain consistency. The top of the pot can be dressed with a fine layer of Casuarina needles or leaf mulch to prevent erosion when watering. If using the same type of potting mix for all genera, adjustments to watering frequency may be necessary.

Water: Have the potting-mix just damp at potting time and do not water until something appears above the surface. Water lightly at regular intervals keeping the pot just moist until a flower stem appears when more frequent water can be applied. Keep plants in this fashion until all growth disappears after flowering, as this should produce stronger tuberoids for next year. Cease watering for at least two weeks prior to re-potting. Dry pots are easier to handle.

Light: Corybas prefer more shade (70%) but most species will grow well in 50%-70& sunlight. Diuris are sun lovers so give them as much as possible.

Fertilisers&Pesticides: A pinch of Blood & Bone at potting time and if given at other times ensure a weak application only or use Nitrosol as this is the liquid form of Blood & Bone. Keep watch for the usual grasshoppers and such things as Red Spider. If Red Spider occurs, flood the top of the pot with your usual dose of Kelthane® or similar or dispense with the pot to save the bother. (My method)

Tuberoid Removal: Some species either reproduce slowly or only produce a replacement for the old tuberoid, so in order to overcome this problem, use the following method. When plants are beginning to bud remove the plant from the pot and carefully sever the new tuberoid. Place old plant and new tuberoid in a shaded area for an hour or two then re-pot the plant with old tuberoid attached and water it well. Pot the new tuberoid into a new pot with fresh mix and water once. The theory being, the old plant will sense the distress of the new tuberoid being lost and thus will produce another as a replacement. Allow both to dry then water lightly until normal re-potting time.

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