

Dracula gigas

From the Latin *gigas*, "a mythological giant," in reference to the size of the plant and flowers.

Discoverer: Padre Andreetta and Alexander Hirtz

Countries: Colombia and Ecuador

Location: Cloud forests at elevations of 1700 to 2600 meters.

Bloom time: Spring to fall. Flower averages 10-14 cm Natural Spread.

Cultivation:

Pot the plant in fine bark with perlite or sphagnum moss. Water regularly and keep the potting media moist.

Grow plant in dappled shade with night temperatures between 50-66 degrees. Will tolerate daytime temperatures of 85-88 degrees. Key to healthy *Draculas* of any species is good air movement, good water (they dislike water with a high mineral content), and humidity of 50-80%.

The pictured plant is growing in a hanging plastic basket with sphagnum moss media. I water the plant twice a week in the winter and 3-4 times a week in spring, summer, and fall—I fertilize *Draculas* the same as any other orchid plant—half strength. Once each month during summer, I use ProTek to strengthen the plants' cellular makeup and reduce any heat stress. Periodically, I water through with plain RO water to remove accumulated salts. Good air movement is needed to keep down the possibility of bacterial infections. In hot summers, I use large leafed plants such as *Stanhopea*, large clumps of *Tillandsia*, and other large hanging plants to supplement the greenhouse shade cloth.

I grow a wide range of *Draculas* using the same growing techniques as above. Among them are: *D. cordobae*, *D. diana*, *D. vampira*, *D. chimera*, *D. mopsus*, *D. bella*, *D. hirtzii*.



Dracula gigas

Grown and photographed by Karlene Sanborn