**Growing your Calathea crotalifera seed**

Calathea crotalifera is a tall growing member of the genus, reaching over 1.8 metres in height. The leaves are large and paddle-shaped, making the plant an ideal feature plant in the tropical garden, or as a pot specimen in cooler areas. The inflorescences of course are the outstanding feature of this plant, varying in colour from yellow to red. They make a brilliant, long lasting show.

Sow your seeds on a well drained medium such as 75% sand and 25% Peat moss, or a potting mix with 50% coarse sand added to it. Keep them in a very bright, filtered light location and maintain consistent moisture levels, not sopping wet, just nice and moist. It may take up to a month for all the seed to germinate, don’t throw them out!

When the seedlings reach 2-3 cm high, carefully transplant them to 5 cm pots using an open potting medium such as Searle’s premium brand with around 25% coarse river sand or 5 mm scoria gravel added to the mix.. Add a pinch only of Osmocote to each pot and water well. Keep your plants in very bright filtered light and do not let them dry out.

Pot on as needed using the same potting medium. Move to early morning sun as they grow, and when they are well established, put them in a location that receives filtered afternoon sun. Give the plants a feed with Osmocote twice a year and water regularly. They do not appreciate drying out completely.

After each spike flowers it will eventually yellow and die and will be replaced by a new shoot which will flower the following season.

The only major pests of this plant are chewing insects such as Grasshoppers and Caterpillars, these can simply be crushed or sprayed with the insecticide Carbaryl if the infestation is heavy. In locations with poor air movement, Mealy Bug can cause trouble, a dab of Metholated spirit on a cotton bud with sort minor problems, or a systemic pesticide such as Confidor or Rogor may be used.

Best of success with your seeds, do contact me if I can be of any further help.

Regards

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