

CORYBAS

ORCHID CULTURE

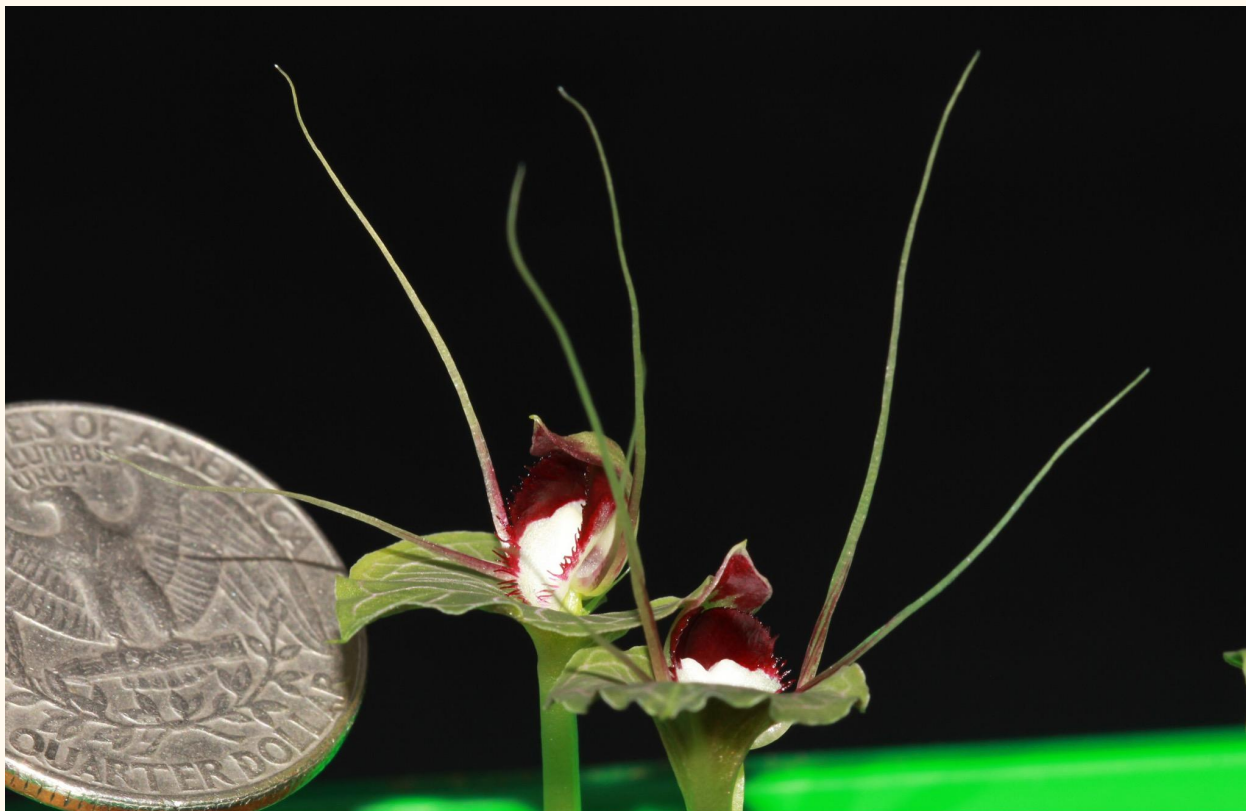
By Tomas Bajza



INTRODUCTION

The following information was written by Tomas Bajza, and published in a French magazine some odd years ago. Tomas Bajza is the founder of [Tarzane Group Inc.](#) Tarzane Group is a company operating in Miami Florida and specializing in miniature orchid species. I requested permission from Tomas to publish the contents of his article so more people would have access to his information on the culture of Corybas. You may also buy your own Corybas tubers off the Tarzane Group website where they are regularly carried. All pictures and information come courtesy of Tomas Bajza.

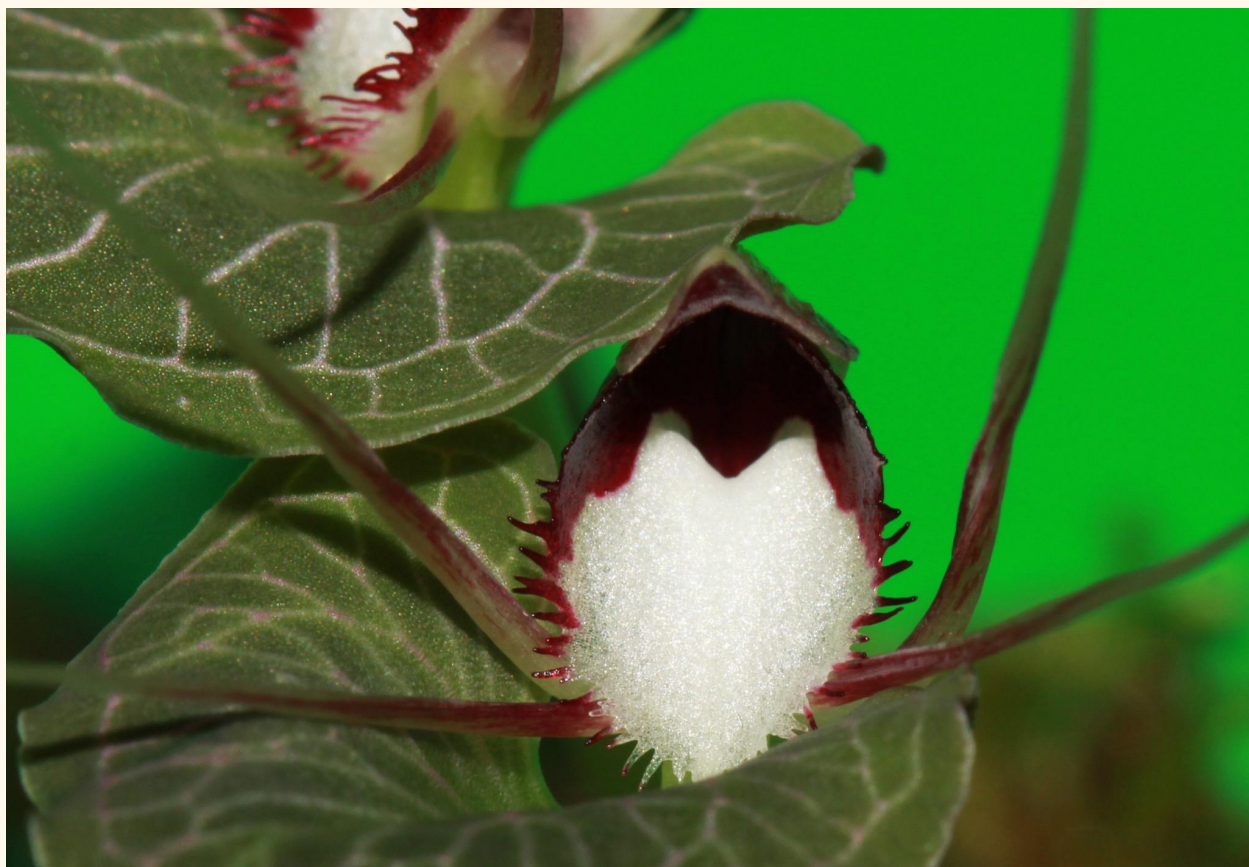
Thanks again, Tomas.



Corybas, also known as "helmet orchid" is a genus of over 100 orchid species found in Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, Southeast Asia, China, Himalayas, Pacific and sub Antarctic islands. Orchids belonging to this group are in majority cases small terrestrial plants, deciduous, with a single leaf at their base and a single flower on a short stalk. Corybas bloom produces large dorsal sepal and labellum. Corybas are lacking roots and only few of them grows as epiphytes. They have underground tubers, and new tubers form at the end of fuzzy root-like looking stolons. Many of them bloom only for a short period of time so there is a lack of research done and info is somehow limited.

I fell in love with these orchids from my first glance at the pictures of the strange looking blooms. At that time I was still an orchid novice and did not know anything about the genus or

how to grow them. Since *Corybas* are rarely offered for sale in the USA, it took me several years till I located the first tubers, three were *Corybas geminigibbus* and two supposedly *Corybas calopeplose*. Upon receiving them in February, I did expansive internet research and started to mimic the ways other growers used. There were many using plastic cups with lids and pure life sphagnum moss, others mixing terrestrial soil mix with some leaves and pine needles. Some growing them deeply potted, some growing tubers just sitting on the life moss. I had 5 tubers and tried two different ways - potted in soil mix, and potted in life sphagnum moss. Some tubers where potted in sphagnum inside a Starbucks plastic cup with the lid, others were potted in tiny clay pots, one filled with terrestrial mix & one with life sphagnum moss. I did collect some tree needles and as recommended and I laid them on the top of the mix to "prevent" newly growing leaves from rotting.



This was all happening some 3 years ago. I was able to grow a leaf on all 5 tubers, but only one tuber created bud. Sadly, the bud did rot and I had no chance to see any blooms. Shortly after leaves rotted too and I was left with 5 tubers again. I did not like either way these were grown. The Pine needles stayed moist constantly and I do believe they were the cause of leaves rotting

too soon. Since my tubers did not have enough growing time in the active growing period, they had not produced any new tubers. In June I decided to force them back to dormancy, removed all tubers from the pots and used small plastic jello cup with the lid. I placed just a little bit of life sphagnum moss on the bottom, very lightly moist, and laid the tubers on the top. I did keep the cup with the lid at all times on and kept them inside the apartment in shady location, checking on them briefly every two weeks or so, and lightly misting when the moss got very dry.

Tubers didn't do much the whole time, they stayed the same, not shriveling or rotting (which was my biggest scare).

Following year in March I saw tiny fuzzy thing starting on the tubers. At that time I already decided to go with my own guts and created brand new Corybas habitat. I purchased a tiny plastic greenhouse in Target, bought very fine inorganic bonsai mix containing pumice, turface and lava rock & some fresh life sphagnum moss. I placed the bonsai mix on the bottom of the greenhouse and placed all 5 sprouting tubers just on the top of the mix - not potting them into the mix! Then, I placed a few strands of life sprigs of the sphagnum moss around the media. I Punched 6 holes in the lid of the greenhouse, and covered the tubers.

Keeping the lid at all times on, I left the greenhouse inside the apartment in the shady area of my growing table. It gets really only small amount of the LED lights that are positioned on the table, I consider it shade location. Temperatures are constant at 75-77F day and 69-70F nights.

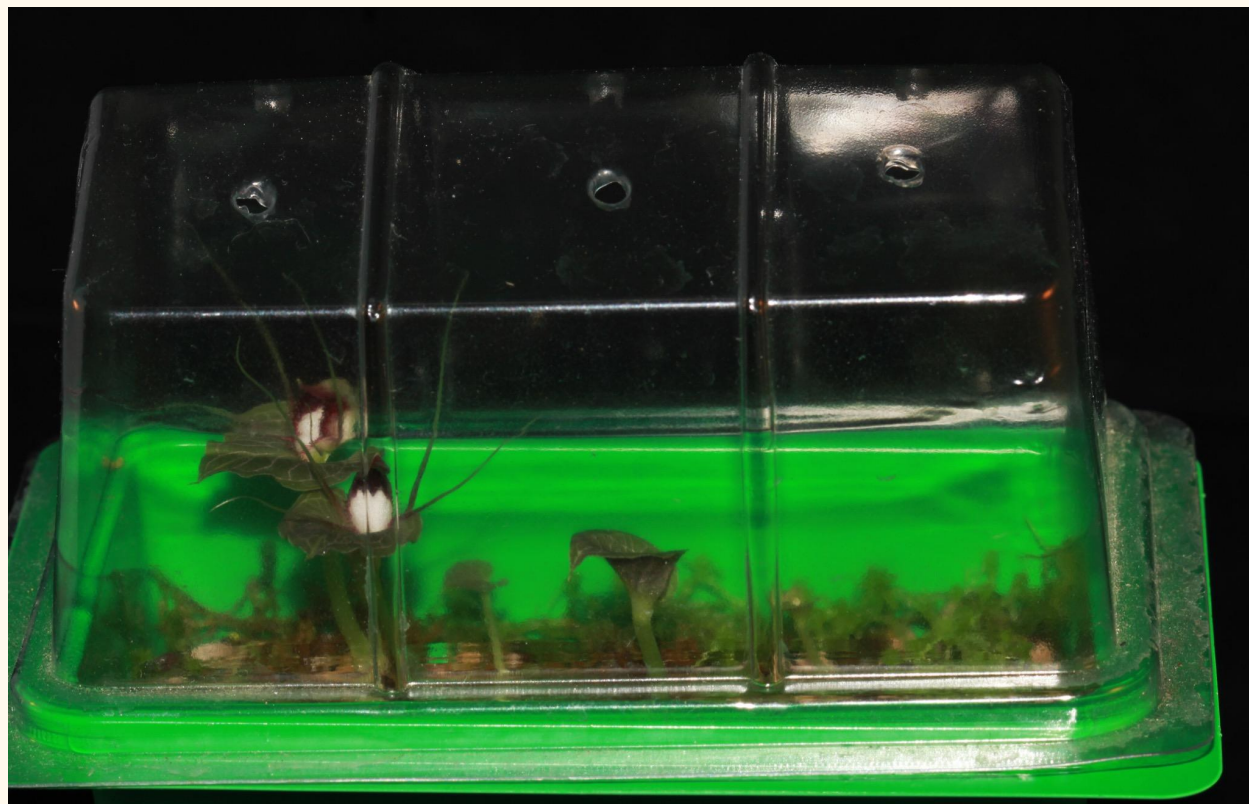


All tubers started to grow in rapid speed growing the leaf first and very shortly after the leaf has opened they did grow each one bud. Learning from the previous year, I did try to avoid any water getting stacked in the leaf crown, so I did water very carefully only the mix. Since the greenhouse has created very moist environment watering was necessary only once every week or so.

All the tubers bloomed the same, and by comparison I discovered they are actually all *Corybas geminigibbus* species. There was no *Corybas calopeplose* among them.

I have read that *Corybas* blooms last very short period of time therefore there is not much research done on them. To my big surprise, my blooms lasted for over a month and half opened. After the blooms died, tubers kept the leaves and started to grow long fuzzy stolons creeping around the whole greenhouse. They all stayed in active growth till December (some 10 months). When the leaves died late December, I ended up having the original 5 tubers and on the newly grown stolons another 5 new ones. I was very undecided if I should remove all tubers again and place to jelly plastic cup for dormancy, or if I should leave them in their new

greenhouse where they seemed to be doing fantastically. In the end I left them all as they were, undisturbed in the same greenhouse. I minimized watering, leaving them at the same light level and same temperatures for the short dormancy period, misting maybe once a month.



The same time as last year, all tubers started to sprout again in mid-March. And the growing cycle is repeating itself - after the leaves opened, all but one tuber produced buds and bloomed pretty much near the same time. After the blooms died, the tubers are keeping an active growing period producing new stolons. I hope by the end of this growing cycle there will be 10 new tubers, so my colony will contain some 20 tubers for the next year.

Due to the fact the colony is spreading pretty fast, I must create new habitat when my tubers go dormant this year. I will use the same mix and method, making the greenhouse bigger so my *Corybas* colony can spread more in the future years. I heard about a guy in Malaysia growing them in his office in the big file plastic container with the lid, having colony of some 300 tubers blooming at the same time.

It seems like *Corybas* do not require much fertilizing when actively growing. I do add very

diluted amount of fertilizer to each watering but since they are being watered only once a week or so during the active growth, they do not get much fertilizer. I do add some MagiCal, and some Seaweed to watering once a month too.

