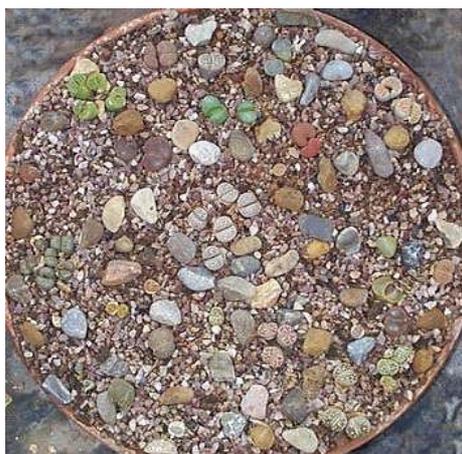


LITHOPS (Living Stones)

Lithops are probably the most well known member of the Mesembryanthemum family, originating from arid regions of South Africa and Namibia. The name Lithops means "stone-like appearance". They are primarily grown for their body form, colouration and markings, though the yellow or white flowers, regularly produced in late summer or autumn, are very attractive.



Cultivation / Plantcare

Lithops are generally quite tolerant, and if due consideration is given to their lifestyle, they will flourish in cultivation.

Watering

Lithops grow in Europe during summer, autumn and into early winter. At this time they should be watered regularly (every one to two weeks depending on the weather - they must however be allowed to dry out fully between waterings). During their dormancy (October to about April) they should not be watered at all.

During their dormant period the plant bodies will shrivel, eventually drying into a papery sheath. This is quite normal, a new pair (or sometimes two new pairs) of "leaves" develop within the old ones and with the commencement of watering (ideally beginning with light sprayings on warm days) in the spring will burst through the previous years' sheaths. *Watering must not commence until*

the old "leaves" have full dried out. If water is given too soon, the old "leaves" will try to continue to grow and the plant will not develop properly. In order to prevent unhealthy growth fertilisers should be applied cautiously and must be of a *low nitrogen* type.

Position

Full sunshine is preferred and encourages flower production. A greenhouse is preferred though Lithops can be grown successfully on a sunny windowsill.

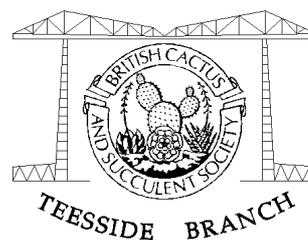
Temperature

For safety the minimum winter temperature should be in the range 4 - 7°C (40 - 45°F). In summer, Lithops can withstand high temperatures, although adequate ventilation should be given in the hottest weather to prevent the risk of scorching.



Compost

Lithops should be grown in a coarse, gritty, slightly acidic compost, such as John Innes No. 2 with added grit. The inclusion of additional fertilisers is not necessary.



Acknowledgement

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