

GIANT *CEPHALOTUS* OF UNKNOWN ORIGINS

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Introduction

I have been growing *Cephalotus follicularis* for over 20 years. Initially, I was obsessed with growing specimen-type *Cephalotus* of different clones and to prove once-and-for-all that this was not a difficult plant to grow. Countless plants have met their demise as I experimented with various methods of cultivation. For those that have survived and flourished, I noticed one plant in particular that grew larger, more vigorous, and had a different pitcher/leaf morphology than *Cephalotus* ‘Hummer’s Giant’ and the typical *Cephalotus*. However, I do not believe this plant to be just a better-grown specimen of ‘Hummer’s Giant’. Through the years, I have given and sold this plant to individuals calling it the “Bubble Giant”, however, I have not received nor heard any feedback as to the well-being of those plants. So, for those reading this article and have received this plant from me, I would appreciate seeing some photos. For the remainder of this article, this plant will be referred to as the “unknown”.

Origins

During my initial spark-of-entry into the hobby, I started collecting *Cephalotus* cuttings, plants, stems, and leaves from anyone who had the plant and was willing to give or sell a piece to me. Because of that activity, this plant is of an unknown origin because of the feverish pace by which I went about amassing what I had hoped would become a genetically diverse collection of plants. Where each of those contributors got their *Cephalotus* was not important to me at the time, so meticulous record keeping went to the wayside. However, the only one source I can claim to have received some of my materials from was Phil Mann. Other than that, one can only guess, because at that time (20+ years ago), the carnivorous plant hobby, in my opinion, was at its peak and almost every carnivorous plant enthusiast would have had a *Cephalotus* nestled in and amongst their collection.

Here lies my dilemma and the purpose of this article: to identify if this clone is currently in cultivation, and whether or not it has a given and accepted name, but has not yet been registered as a cultivar.

Characteristics

The most prominent features of this plant is its size, with foliar leaves measuring 6-11 cm and pitchers averaging 6 cm, but on rare occasions, can reach 10 cm long (Figs. 1-4). The rim of the largest pitchers produced on mature plants is approximately 2.5-3 cm wide. Another unique feature of this plant is the lid: being slightly wider than the rim and half as tall, it produces a semi-circular, half-ladle, parabolic shape. The vase of the pitcher (rim to base) is stouter, not as elongated as in the typical form, and the elegant “waist” just below the rim is not as pronounced, giving the pitchers an overall stunted appearance. This plant takes at least 5 years to reach maturity from mature leaf cuttings.

Cultivation

All of my plants are grown indoors under 4-foot, 40-watt fluorescent shop lights, 6 inches from the source. They are cultivated in an unheated, non-air-conditioned room with open windows where



Figure 1: A side-by-side comparison of 20+ year old plants. The “unknown” (left) and the typical form (right). Both growing in African violet mix in 6-inch pots.



Figure 2: A side-by-side comparison between the “unknown” (left) and ‘Hummer’s Giant’ (right). The foliar leaves of the “unknown” are much larger than the leaves on the ‘Hummer’s Giant’. Both plants are over 20 years old, cultivated under identical conditions, in 4-inch pots, and in African violet mix.



Figure 3: Pitcher comparison between 'Hummer's Giant' (left) and the "unknown" (center). While the "unknown" plant is green when cultivated under regular fluorescent 40-watt shop lights, the entire plant attains a rich pinkish-red coloration when grown under blue/red LED grow lights (right).



Figure 4: Pitcher rim comparison between 'Hummer's Giant' (left) and the "unknown" (right). While the comparison between the pitchers and rims may appear insignificant and such variations can be produced on the same plant, over 90% of the pitchers produced on either the "unknown" and 'Hummer's Giant' do conform to the photos.

they experience seasonal temperature changes of summer and winter. The lights are set on timers with a 16-hour photoperiod year round. Watering is by the tray method or with polyester wicks tucked into the pots' drainage holes, drawing water through capillary action from a water reservoir.

The potting media I use for my plants is an organic African violet mix from E.B. Stone Organics which contains fir bark, redwood compost, and sand; purchased from my local plant nursery. However, when propagating cuttings, I use a 50/50 peat and sand mix or pure perlite until roots and plantlets are evident. Then, they are transplanted into the African violet mix. Reproduction is by vegetative propagation (leaves and pitchers), division, and pups developing from side shoots.