

HAWORTHIA LOCKWOODII

By Sue Haffner



Photo from Kara Nursery

Haworthia lockwoodii is one of the most distinctive and unusual looking haworthias, rare in collections and much sought after by collectors. Described in 1940 by Miss Eily Archibald, the type specimen was found at Floriskraal Dam in Laingsburg, South Africa. It is named after S. Lockwood-Hill, an avid haworthia collector who was a magistrate at Laingsburg.

Bruce Bayer, in "The new Haworthia handbook", described this species as "most attractive in the field when the dead, whitened leaf tips are closed in a tight umbrella-like canopy over the plant. The plants then resemble dried-off onions."

Haworthia lockwoodii occurs in the arid Great Karoo at several localities, particularly in the southwestern Karoo from Laingsburg to Klaarstrom, mainly on the lower slopes of the Witteburg Mountains. It is a light green, translucent leaved plant, and is easily recognized by the dying back of the broad flat

leaves which are glabrous and inwardly curved. In the dormant stage more than half of the leaf turns papery--white and becomes thin like parchment paper, thus closing in a tight umbrella--like canopy over the heart of the plant. This gives the smaller younger internal leaves protection from the harsh summer environment. The photos opposite (from "Haworthia for the collector" by Rudolf Schulz) show the plant in active growth (top) and dormant (bottom).

The habitat for H. lockwoodii is usually very hot in summer and very cold in winter, with the higher mountain slopes often covered in snow. Rain occurs mostly in the summer months, however, according to Bayer, little water should be given at this time and only in winter. In nature the plants are usually well hidden, growing between large stones and boulders, or under scrub in quartzite soil. Potted plants should probably be protected from harsh afternoon sun.

In cultivation, great care needs to be observed in watering. Bayer says water only in winter. Schulz recommends sparse watering in spring and autumn only. In the Huntington Desert Garden Conservatory their 5 or 6 plants of H. lockwoodii are placed up on the windowsill above the other haworthias, perhaps to escape their being watered with the other plants—though some authorities maintain that the plants should never be watered from above, as moisture captured between leaves can cause the plant to rot. A well--draining but fairly nutritious potting mix should be used. Some growers repot every two years, or so, and find that their plants respond with renewed growth. Specimens in cultivation routinely grow larger than plants in habitat (which is true with most succulent plants, of course). Some growers recommend using only deep terra cotta pots. You

should soak these pots before using and pot with a moist mix.

Haworthia lockwoodii is not known to produce offsets, so propagation is by seed, leaf cuttings or coring. Using the leaf cuttings can be a bit more difficult than it is with most haworthias, as the leaves can dry out if kept under low humidity and rot if kept in humid situations. The older outer leaves are difficult to root; plumper younger leaves should be used. You will need to remove all those outer leaves in order to have access to the younger ones.

Coring involves cutting out the center of the plant to produce offsets. As the offsets grow larger, they can be detached and potted up on their own. A very sharp knife or scalpel is needed; some people even use a drill to clear out the center of the rosette. Another method is to cut up the plant as you would slice a pie. Each portion should contain a section of the main stem, and those with roots will continue to grow and produce the most rosettes. All these techniques are very disfiguring to the plant, of course. If the thought of attacking *H. lockwoodii* gives you the shivers, you can try these on more common plants. Consult the propagation chapter in Schulz's book, which is in the club library.