



Painting by Susan M. Philipps

Rajah Brooke's Pitcher Plant

(*Nepenthes rajah* Hook.f.)

Rajah Brooke's Pitcher Plant (*Nepenthes rajah* Hook.f.) is the largest among the pitcher plants, which are known as the most extraordinary plants in the world. Because of its size, Rajah Brooke's pitcher plant has been described as the most unusual of the group, and thus labelled "King of the Pitcher plants". The largest recorded pitcher can hold 3.5 litres of water. It is also famous for its capability of drowning small rats. The reddish-purplish-brown pitchers often attract quite a number of large insects and other ants and flies.

Unlike other pitcher plants that are mostly climbing, Rajah Brooke's is a prostrate or struggling shrub, rarely higher than 1 to 1.5 m. Its flower spikes are massive, up to 80 cm, and some 120 cm, with one to two flowers on each stalk. The large-peltate-tipped leaves grow up to 50 cm long, produce a majority of ground pitchers, deep red to purple on the outside, sometimes pale green inside, with a very oblique mouth, a broad wavy peristome and a very large oval scooped lid, which is often pale green underneath



and covered with many large nectar glands.

Found only in Borneo, particularly in Mt. Kinabalu and Mt. Tamboyukon, this magnificent plant is restricted to ultramafic soils between 1650 m and 2650 m. It also prefers more open habitats on sloping stony ground, such as old landslides, often with seeping ground water.

Status: Rare and Endangered

– The Research Branch, ARCBC

