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Peyote

Lophophora williamsii

The favorite cactus of Aztec shamans

Worth Knowing: The slow-growing Peyote is a small, soft-fleshy, hemispherical-shaped cactus without spikes, that grows not more than 8 to 15 cm. From spring until summer it produces small, pinky flowers. It is rather famous, or more likely infamous, for its high content of more than 50 alkaloids, of which the psychedelic substance mescaline is the most commonly known and can bring hallucinogenic states of intoxication and illusion. Before the Spanish conquered Mexico, the Peyote had a strong cultural meaning for the Mexican people. Ironically, during the inquisition and missionary work, it was more and more replaced by another intoxicant, the agave liquor tequila.

Natural Location: The Peyote has its natural habitat in North Mexico and in the U.S. state of Texas.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. Spread the seeds onto finely sieved potting compost or cactus earth that contains about 25% sand and is moistened with a water vaporizer. For a light germinator you don't need to put any potting earth on top. Cover the seed container with clear film to prevent the earth from drying out, but don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm with a temperature between 20°C and 25°Celsius and keep the earth – preferably with a water sprayer – moist, but not wet. The first seedlings will come up after one or two weeks.

Place: The Peyote needs plenty of light and likes to be kept on a sunny window sill throughout the year. During summer it can also be moved to a wind and rain-sheltered place outdoors.

Care: Water the plant preferably with lime-deficient water and only after the earth has dried out completely, while avoiding waterlogging. The best way of watering the cactus, is by filling the saucer with water for a couple of hours. After the plant is saturated, remove the remaining water because waterlogging might cause damage. You should also provide fluid fertilizer for cactus plants every three to four weeks.

During the winter: As soon as the temperatures fall below 10° Celsius, the Peyote has to be moved indoors. Water the plant just enough, so that the substrate doesn't dry out completely.