Lithops represent a special cultivation challenge, not because they are actually difficult to grow, but because new collectors are conditioned early on to believe that they are. Beginners often buy lithops—for their novelty, their charm, their beauty, their otherworldliness—and water them at the wrong time, provide too little light (or too much light, too soon), and make all the mistakes that beginning experts can make, only to find that lithops just aren’t quite as forgiving as other succulents. Lithops rarely rot only halfway. With a shrug of the shoulders it’s easy to pass up lithops as something not really made for this world. Or at least not the world of a private succulent collection. And yet the plants remain ever-available, and ever-popular. So there must be tricks to growing them successfully.

We would contend that the best way to collect lithops is to raise them yourself, from seed. Born into your ambience, they are far more likely to remain there. But for some reason too many collectors are loathe to attempt lithops, or any other plant for that matter, from seed. But the reasons for trying are a litany of pluses. Raising lithops from seed gives, for the cost of a packet (usually less than a dollar), between 20 and 50 plants, each unique—an opportunity to see the range of possibility that exists within a single species (or at least a population of that species) at a tiny fraction of the cost of buying a single full-grown plant. Imagine buying 50 lithops of a single species at $3 apiece. Instant gratification on the bench in exchange for a little pain in the bank account.

Many people imagine that succulent seedlings must be impossibly slow, almost static, and therefore you could never obtain a flowering plant in your lifetime. But lithops look great from the get-go, show their individuality within just a few months, and become admirable plants of flowering size in just two or three years. Sure, it seems a long time to wait, but we aren’t growing plants for their disposability. We are hoping to have these things live with us for a long time. So why not start young and enjoy the whole process?

It is true that lithops present certain horticultural challenges. But as seedlings they present no more difficulty than any other collectible succulent seedling. And because the seeds are easy to come by, easy to germinate,