A passion for Haworthia

Northern beginnings

Although I have been growing succulents since I was a kid, I was not interested in Haworthia until I was in my twenties. I am especially attracted to colorful plants, so I was mainly growing Sempervivum and Echeveria. I still like them a lot because of their vibrant colors, but they grow too fast and require a lot of maintenance and space. Then, I was living in Seattle area and there weren't any succulent nurseries around that had large variety of Haworthia. My interest only started when I first saw a group of Haworthia truncata and H. maughanii specimens in a nursery in Tokyo, Japan in 1997. They were so strange looking—like chopped off leaves—that I bought one of each home. I was amazed by the focus and the commitment involved in breeding these plants. At that time, all the focus was in improving the window markings; so simple yet so challenging because of the rarity of good breeding stock. I decided to buy a few good plants and try breeding better ones.

Then I started to read more about them. I bought the Haworthia truncata Handbook and the Haworthia maughanii Handbook by Tony Sato. Pretty soon I was searching for the plants depicted in the books when I visited nurseries in Japan, hunting for H. truncata and H. maughanii with excellent window markings (Figs. 1 & 2).

My growing conditions differed greatly between the time I lived in Seattle and after I moved to CA. The weather in Seattle is mostly cloudy and rainy for the most part of the year. I grew all my haworthias under grow lights in a greenhouse, equipped with heater. I grew them in 70% pumice, 25% SuperSoil and 5% crushed charcoal. All plants were under lights for 16 hours per day. From late Fall to early Spring, I ran the heater 12 hours per day. I fertilized once a year with a liquid fertilizer used for orchids. I found that the high humidity and the mild summer were very good for haworthia growth. At that time, I only had

1. Haworthia truncata ‘Kazan’ (‘Volcano’). This is probably the most intriguing plant in my collection. It grows to 5.25 inches and the leaves resemble lava coming out of an erupting volcano.

2. Haworthia maughanii ‘Mushroom’, acquired from Japan several years ago. The breeder is unknown.