

Seed Sowing by Roger Moreton

Over the years, I have tried various composts for germinating Mammillaria seedlings. Here is one approach that worked well for me.

Firstly the compost. I would like to commend coir. I get absolutely no trouble with sciara fly and I believe it is due to the coir, which lets the top surface get quite dry while retaining water underneath and incidentally also eliminates growth of moss etc. My recipe is to use one coir block which is still available from the Chempak people, Garden Direct, I believe). One block will make one two gallon bucketful. To this I add a further bucketful consisting of about 25% JI 2 and 75% grit, sand and perlite.

I use 2" pots and I fill them with compost and give them a good watering from overhead. I do not soak them. I sow the seeds then put usually, 24 pots in a tray and put it in a large polythene bag and into the propagator.

The propagators I use are home made, quite large (big enough for eight seed trays). I heat them with a soil warming cable and control the heat with an accurate thermostat, the remote thermocouple type. Both the cable and the thermostat are available from Two Wests and Elliot. I used to have the propagator under the bench with artificial lighting, but since having got rid of my collection they have been promoted to the top of the bench and I no longer bother with lighting.