

# CRYPTOCORYNE USTERIANA

GVAC Tank Notes, April-June 2011

By Chase Klinesteker



Crypt. usteriana in pots with gravel over soil

## DESCRIPTION AND CULTIVATION

Cryptocoryne usteriana is a large and colorful plant that can be an eye-catching showpiece for any tank. The long narrow leaves are green on top and a red-purple underneath, and will reach over 2 feet in length. They have an undulating, crinkled surface that is very attractive, reminding one of an aponogeton. They are from the Philippines and have become available more recently, yet they don't ship well, and are not seen often in retail stores. They are a true aquatic plant that tolerates harder water (PH 6-8) than many cryptocorynes. The underwater flower is very unusual. It is a delicate, purple and white, long, narrow cone of 6-8 inches that is topped by a spathe with rolled edges. It looks like some glass sculptures I saw over at Meijer Gardens! As with most crypts, it does not like to be moved and is a slow grower. That is why I like to pot them, so they can be moved without stress. I find that a plastic pan about 3-4 inches in diameter and about 2 inches deep with no holes seems to work best. I place dry potting soil in the bottom around  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep and a small amount of moistened BB sized gravel over it. Then I spread the roots out and hold the crown steady while I put moist gravel around the plant up to and even slightly over the crown. There should be 2-3 times more gravel than potting soil so the potting soil is not disturbed and the plant is held firmly in place. I will add some dolomite gravel in the mix, which seems to get better results. I try to keep the time the plant is out of the water to a minimum, as it seems to be more sensitive to drying out. One plant I left moist and bagged up for 4 days lost all its leaves and though the root survived, it took a considerable time for it to recover. If the potted plant is put in with fish that dig, larger gravel or even stones will have to be put on top. Crypt. usteriana will take a year or more to reach full size with smaller plants to harvest, and at 73-75 degrees in temperature they seem to be the

most happy. It needs medium light and my best growth of it has been in my 70 gallon tanks with 2 bulb shoplights over each. Water changes seem to spur its' growth, but they do not grow well in tanks overcrowded with fish.

I highly recommend *Crypt. usteriana* to add color and interest to a planted aquarium.



*Cryptocoryne usteriana* bloom spathe