

Carnivorous Plants

Information adapted from flytrapfarm.com

Venus Flytraps

Even though there is only one species, there is wide variation among plants.



The typical plant is green, with a reddish-orange color on the inside of the mature trap. Traps have 'trigger hairs' inside; an unwary insect that is attracted to the plant's nectar will brush against the trigger hairs, causing the trap to snap shut. It literally squeezes the body fluids out of the insect and digests it, opening back up in about 4 days with just a carcass left!

Each trap only closes about 4 times, then turns black, and new growth then replaces it. This is the reason you should not stick your finger in the trap - if you want to show your friends how the traps close, catch a fly, moth, cricket, or other small insect and feed your plant!

Venus Fly-Traps are bog plants, growing in nutrient-deficient soils like peat moss or long-fibered

sphagnum moss. The pot should be set in a bowl or dish of water (not tap-water - use distilled or rain-water), and in a sunny location. In the winter the plants like to go dormant. This is their normal resting period, and the size of the 'corm' (similar to a bulb) will increase during dormancy. The best way to help your plant is to remove it from the pot, cut back the leaves, and put the corm in a zip-lock bag in your refrigerator for 2-3 months. About mid-February, replant the corm in peat with a little sand added, and put the pot back in water on a sunny windowsill. It usually takes about 6 weeks for your plant to grow large again, and they will also flower at this time.

Sundews

Sundews occur in boggy areas around the world. They are beautiful little plants, often tinged with red, and covered with a sticky glue that glistens in the sunlight like dewdrops! They exude a sweet-smelling nectar, which attracts gnats, fruit-flies, and other small insects. Once they have captured their prey, they absorb and digest



it's body fluids. Many sundews are self-pollinating, so that when they bloom and seed out, there will be a carpet of new plants around them. Their pot should be set in a bowl or dish of water (not tap-water because of the chlorine - use distilled or rainwater), and placed in a very sunny location. In the wild the dew falls on them every day, so if it is dry in your house, you might need to spray-mist the plant occasionally.

Pitcher Plants

Pitcher Plants occur in many areas of the world in wet, boggy environments. Usually they flower first, before developing their pitchers or nectar, so that their pollinators won't be eaten before they can pollinate the plants! Most pitcher plants secrete a sweet-smelling nectar around the lip of the pitcher which attracts wasps, yellow jackets, beetles, ants and other small insects. The nectar makes the insects drowsy, and once they follow the nectar trail into the trap, they are unable to keep their footing and slip and fall in. Downward pointing hairs



add to the difficulties in escaping. Once they're down in the tube, the digestive enzymes start to work; by fall, the tubes are often quite full of beetle backs, wings, feet, and other indigestible body parts!! They go dormant in the winter, re-emerging from their rhizome in the spring. If planted outside around a pond, they should be well-mulched to protect them if the ground freezes. Or the rhizome can be dug up, dead leaves trimmed off, and placed in a plastic bag (closed, but not completely airtight) in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator for the winter for 2-3 months. To grow indoors, they will live fine in a pot using peat or long-fibered sphagnum moss kept damp all the time, or even just in water (use rainwater or distilled water). Use the refrigerator method to allow them to go dormant in the winter.

Butterworts

Butterworts capture and digest insects in a similar manner to sundews. Their leaves have a greasy feel (like butter). Some varieties actually curl the edges of the leaves in response to



capturing an insect with their sticky glue. The flowers can be white, yellow or purple, and some species flower regularly during the year. We don't suggest growing these in water, but do always keep the soil somewhat moist, and use distilled water or rainwater.



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