

HOW TO



Care for your Carnivorous Plants

Carnivorous plants or Insectivores derive their nutrients from insects that they catch in their leaves or funnels. There are three groups of these insectivorous plants; Spring Traps (Dionaea - Venus Fly Trap), Pitfall Traps (Sarracenia - Pitcher Plants) and Sticky Leaved Traps (Drosera - Sundew)



Dionaea muscipula (Venus Fly Trap)

It is probably the most spectacular in its 'catching action'. They have spiny edged, heart-shaped leaves that are hinged in the middle (quite like an empty sea mussel). When touched by an insect, the two halves close quickly together, trapping the insect inside.

WATERING & FEEDING

Hard alkaline water is poisonous to these plants. Use rainwater if available, distilled water or previously boiled water that has been left to go cold.

Carnivorous plants do not require feeding as they obtain all sufficient nutrients from the insects they catch. Using fertiliser or liquid feed on these plants, usually results in their death. Contrary to popular belief, it is not necessary for you to trap flies and feed them to your plant. A healthy plant will catch enough flies by itself to happily survive.

RE-POTTING

All plants are pot grown and should not need re-potting for at least one growing season.



Sarracenia (Trumpet Pitcher)

These have long, upright, funnel-like leaves or pitchers, sometimes streaked with brightly coloured veins. This vivid colouration attracts the insects to the nectar. The inside of the pitcher is slippery and once inside, the insect falls to the bottom and unable to escape, it drowns in the pepsin solution in the base.

COMPOST

It is recommended that you use a proprietary carnivorous plant compost. Failure to do so would probably result in root scorch

CULTIVATION

Dionaea, Sarracenia and Drosera should stand permanently in about 2.5cm (1") of water throughout the growing season. In Winter, it is best to let the compost to be moist rather than wet, allowing the compost to dry out before refilling.

Plants are tolerant of most fungicide sprays. Watch for greenfly, which can be a pest of young growth. Dead growth should be removed.



Drosera (Sundew)

Bears a rosette of leaves, covered with red hairs. Each hair is crowned by a drop of clear mucilage which glistens in the sunshine like dew. The fluid secreted by these hairs, both traps the insect and then digests it.

AS HOUSEPLANTS

Place in a sunny position, preferably on a south facing windowsill, though Sarracenia Purpurea Venosa will tolerate east or west facing windows. A collection makes a very interesting and colourful display.

IN THE GREENHOUSE

A cool greenhouse with a minimum temperature of 40F in Winter will provide an ideal atmosphere for a majority of species. If propane, natural gas or paraffin heaters are used, some ventilation must be allowed, even on the coldest night.

The carnivorous habit is normally only found in plants which inhabit land or water that is nitrogen deficient - in the main, acid bogs. Because their leaves are adapted to make good this deficiency, it is the aim of the collector to try to recreate these conditions in a home environment.