CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

Venus Flytrap, Sundew, Pitcher Plants

Carnivorous plants are a natural wonder of the plant world. There are many different types of carnivorous plants that come in all shapes and sizes. They use their foliage to trap and kill curious insects that have been lured to them. In their natural habitat, they live in moist, boggy conditions with bright indirect light. Procuring an environment that stays humid and delivers adequate light will ensure a healthy plant that is pushing out new growth.

Common Varieties:

Pitcher Plants *(Nepenthes)* have elongated cups at the ends of their leaves that contain digestive enzymes that attract arthropod prey into the cups and not back out.

Sundew *(Drosera rotundifolia)* have long tentacles that stretch out with sticky red glands on the end that attract prey

Venus Flytraps *(Dionaea muscipula)* sit at the end of a long stalk with a red center and teeth that close up upon contact.

Planting + General Care

Place in **bright indirect light** during growing seasons. Too little light will slow growth and potentially kill them. Maintain warm temperatures between 70° and 90° F during active growth and temperatures as low as 40°F during dormancy with protection. Good air circulation is also key.

Keep evenly moist but not soggy. Water when about ¼ of the medium has dried out, but never let the pot sit in standing water. **Water with filtered or rainwater only.** Carnivorous plants prefer a sphagnum-based mix with additions of perlite, peat moss, or sand to help with drainage and water retention.

Keep humidity high by misting or with the addition of a humidity tray. If you notice that your carnivorous plants are not trapping food, you can give them a snack such as a small fly, ant, or gnat once a month. Movement inside will trigger the trap to close. For dead prey, after placing food in the open trap, gently touch the inside of the trap until you see it start to close. **Only trigger traps to close if there is food for the plant. Playing with the traps just to make them close wastes energy**, which can lead to the plants' decline. Make sure the insect is no bigger than a third of the size of the trap itself. Pitcher plants do best with ½" of water in the pitchers, so when watering it is helpful to get water into the pitchers.

Fertilizing

Carnivorous plants do not require much in terms of soil and fertilizer. The poor quality of soil and nutrients in their native environment has led carnivorous plants to adapt to trapping and digesting live prey to get all the nutrients they need.

Propagation

Propagate by division, seeds, and leaf cuttings. Leaf cuttings can be placed in water or laid on top of a moist moss until roots form, then planted in their normal medium. Rhizomes can be carefully divided with a sharp knife and cut into 1-inch sections to plant separately.

Common Problems + Solutions

Carnivorous plants don't have many pest issues to note. Mealybugs, aphids, and spider mites can sometimes be found affecting these plants. Insecticidal soap and a good spray off will help control any infestations.

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