

Carnivorous Plants

These amazing and fascinating plants are surprisingly hardy and with a little understanding, quite easy and fun to grow. Carnivorous plants hardy in the Pacific Northwest include all species and hybrids of Pitcher Plants (*Sarracenia* spp.), the Cobra Lily (*Darlingtonia californica*), the Venus Fly Trap (*Dionaea muscipula*) and many species of Sundews (*Drosera* spp.) and Butterworts (*Pinquicula* spp.).

OUTDOOR CULTURE:

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade is acceptable, but these plants respond directly to the amount of warmth they receive.

Soils and Potting: Often grown in containers in a special soil mix of peat moss and coarse sand or peat moss, sand and perlite. Do not use traditional potting soils since these plants are intolerant of the lime and fertilizers used in most soil mixes. A soil mixture suitable for most species would be 3-4 parts peat moss, 1 part coarse sand and 1 part perlite. Hardy carnivorous plants may also be planted in natural or artificial bogs. Pitcher plants (*Sarracenia* var) are hardy in our area, and can be mulched with straw for protection from cold weather. All varieties of carnivorous plants will benefit from being put outside during the spring and summer, just remember to accustom them to the brighter light and cooler night temperatures gradually; and remember to bring them in or protect them when fall arrives.

Watering: All of these plants can be grown outdoors in pots left sitting in a couple inches of water never over the crowns. These plants cannot tolerate any fertilizer and pure water only should be used. If your water is hard (high in mineral content) you should use rain water or distilled water.

Winter Protection: Before severe freezing weather in the fall, remove the plants from their water environment and group the plants together in a sheltered place or bury the pots into the soil. Plants in the ground should have their crowns covered with several inches of loose leaves, straw or fir boughs. They may also be overwintered in a cold frame or unheated greenhouse.

INDOOR CULTURE:

Most species of carnivorous plants may be grown as house plants in a sunny window or under fluorescent grow lights. The tropical species will keep growing year round while temperate types often show a partial or complete winter dormancy. Plants grown indoors must sit in water year round. Do a complete water change every few weeks to prevent salt build up. Do not fertilize carnivorous plants. They are adapted to grow with few nutrients and a shot of commercial fertilizer, no matter how well intentioned, will quickly kill the plants.