



Columbia Nursery

Caring for Carnivorous Houseplants

Venus Flytraps • Pitcher Plants • Sundews

Columbia Nursery is proud to offer a variety of carnivorous plants—nature’s most fascinating bug catchers! These unique plants have evolved to thrive in nutrient-poor environments by supplementing their diets with insects. Whether you’re a seasoned plant lover or just starting out, caring for these botanical curiosities is fun and rewarding.

Meet the Carnivorous Plant Family

Venus Flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*)

- Famous for its snap-shut traps that catch flies and small insects
- Native to wet, boggy areas of the Carolinas
- Each trap has tiny trigger hairs; when touched, the trap closes rapidly

Pitcher Plants (*Nepenthes*, *Sarracenia*, etc.)

- Use tube-shaped “pitchers” filled with digestive fluids to trap bugs
- Some pitchers are tall and upright (*Sarracenia*), others are hanging and tropical (*Nepenthes*)
- Insects are attracted by nectar and bright colors

Sundews (*Drosera*)

- Small plants covered in sticky, glistening hairs
- Insects get stuck on the dew-like substance and are slowly digested
- Beautiful and delicate, but excellent at catching gnats and fruit flies

Basic Care Tips

Carnivorous plants don’t need fertilizers or potting soil like other houseplants. Instead, follow these simple guidelines to keep them healthy:

Light

- Bright light is essential—place them in a sunny window, under grow lights, or outdoors in summer
- Venus flytraps and sundews prefer at least 4–6 hours of direct sun
- Pitcher plants enjoy bright indirect light or dappled sun, depending on the variety



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Water

- Use only distilled water, rainwater, or reverse osmosis water—tap water can kill these plants
- Keep the soil consistently moist but not waterlogged
- Most carnivorous plants prefer a tray system: set the pot in a shallow dish of water so the plant can soak up moisture from below

Soil

- Use a 50/50 mix of sphagnum peat moss and perlite or sand (no fertilizers!)
- Never use standard potting soil or compost—these will damage or kill carnivorous plants

Humidity

- Most carnivorous plants enjoy high humidity, especially tropical pitcher plants (Nepenthes) and sundews
- You can increase humidity with a humidity tray, terrarium, or occasional misting

Feeding

- These plants get nutrients from insects, not fertilizer!
- Do not feed meat or human food—it will rot and harm the plant
- Indoor plants can catch their own prey, but if needed, feed small bugs like gnats or fruit flies
- Venus flytraps only close their traps a limited number of times before the trap dies, so only feed when necessary

Seasonal Care

Winter Dormancy (Venus Flytraps & Sarracenia Pitcher Plants)

- Venus flytraps and temperate pitcher plants go dormant in winter (Nov–Feb)
- Reduce watering, provide cooler temperatures (35–50°F), and let them rest
- Don't worry if leaves die back—they'll regrow in spring!

Tropical Pitcher Plants & Sundews

- These do not require dormancy—keep them warm and humid year-round

Common Issues

Problem

Possible Cause

Black traps on Venus flytrap

Natural aging or overfeeding



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Pitchers drying up

Not enough humidity or light

No dew on sundews

Air too dry or not enough light

Plant turning brown

Tap water used or incorrect soil

Fun Fact:

Carnivorous plants evolved in nutrient-poor bogs, so their bug-catching adaptations are a survival strategy—not just a cool trick!

Need Help?

Visit Columbia Nursery for supplies, care tips, and to explore our selection of unique carnivorous plants. We're happy to help you succeed!