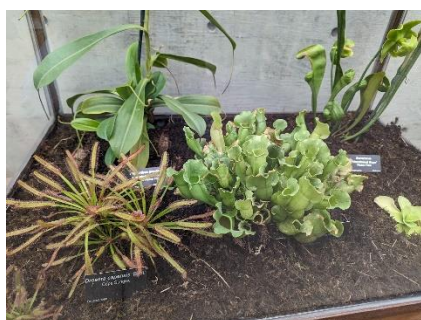


Growing Carnivorous Plants



Carnivorous plants have an exciting name and equally exciting characteristics. The bright colors and sweet nectar they produce attract live prey, typically insects. Once in contact with the nectar a combination of sticky hairs and slippery surfaces prevent the insects from escaping. The plants also produce enzymes which aide in digesting the victims so nutrients can be absorbed into the plant.

Carnivorous plants can be categorized as active or passive depending on how they trap prey. One of the most common carnivorous plants, the Venus fly trap (*Dionaea muscipula*), is an example of an active plant because it physically moves to capture its prey. Passive traps, such as pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*), have long, slender tubes that allow prey to enter and fall to the base where they are unable to climb back out. Semi-active varieties, such as sundews (*Drosera*), can move slightly as portions of the leaf margin may wrap over the prey.



Media

Native to swamplands, carnivorous plants typically prefer acidic and saturated soil. To prepare your own media, mix equal parts of peat moss and sand in a container. Do not use media that has any kind of fertilizer added as these plants obtain their own nutrition through their prey.

Water

The best source of water for these plants is rainwater. If growing indoors or if rainwater is inconsistent, distilled water can be used. If the growing container has holes in the base, keep a saucer beneath the container. The soil should be kept wet at all times. The easiest way to ensure the plants don't dry out is to keep a steady supply of water in the saucer.

Maintenance

During the summer, carnivorous plants can be grown outdoors in an area that receives filtered sun. It is not necessary to provide supplemental fertilizer. Carnivorous plants are native to areas with low nutrient value.



Mental Health Monday



One way we can support our mental health is taking on a challenge that is an appropriate degree of difficulty. In the world of gardening, that can mean learning to care for a unique type of plants. If your garden centers don't have carnivorous plants available, there are reliable sources online. There is a learning curve to growing these plants, but the reward is worth the effort.

Do you have any unique or exotic plant collections? Email Cynthia at cdom@ksu.edu to share your garden adventure with us.

Cynthia Domenghini, Horticulture Extension Specialist



Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
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