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# Carnivorous Plant Basic Care

## **Wet all of the time.**

Carnivorous plants are native to bogs and similar nutrient-poor habitats. As a consequence, the plants live in conditions that are constantly damp. To grow healthy carnivorous plants, it is important to duplicate their habitat as closely as possible. Keep the soil wet or at least damp all of the time. The easiest way to do this is use the tray method. Set the pots in a tray or saucer, and keep water in it at all times. Pitcher plants can grow in soggy soil with the water level in the saucer as deep as 1/2 the pot, but most carnivorous plants prefer damp to wet soil, so keep the water at about 1/4 inch and refill as soon as it is nearly gone. Water from below, by adding water to the tray, rather than watering the plant. This will avoid washing away the sticky mucilage of the sundews and butterworts and keep from closing the flytraps with a false alarm.

## **Mineral-free water.**

Always use mineral-free water with your carnivorous plants, such as rainwater or distilled water. Try keeping a bucket near the downspout to collect rainwater. Distilled water can be purchased at the grocery store, but avoid bottled drinking water. There are simply too many minerals in it. The condensation line from an air conditioner or heat pump is another source of mineral-free water. Reverse-osmosis water is fine to use. Carnivorous plants grow in nutrient poor soils. The minerals from tap water can “over-fertilize” and “burn out” the plants. In a pinch, tap water will work for a short while, but flush out the minerals with generous portions of rainwater, when it is available.

## **Mineral-free soil.**

The nutrient poor soils to which the carnivorous plants have adapted are often rich in peat and sand. This can be duplicated with a soil mixture of sphagnum peat moss and horticultural sand. Be sure to check the peat label for sphagnum moss. Other types will not work well. The sand should be clean and washed. Play box sand is great, and so is horticultural sand. Avoid “contractor’s sand” which will contain fine dust, silt, clay and other minerals. Never use beach sand or limestone based sand. The salt content will harm the plants. The ratio of the mix is not critical, 1 part peat with 1 part sand works well for most carnivorous plants. Flytraps prefer a bit more sand, and nepenthes prefer much more peat, but again the mix is not critical, as long as it is sphagnum peat and clean, washed sand.

## **Lots of light.**

Carnivorous plants, as a general rule, grow best in sunny conditions. Many do well in partial sun. The nutrient-poor, soggy bogs provide bad conditions for most plants. Those that do grow in the bog are usually stunted or short in height. As a consequence, the carnivorous plant habitat tends to be open and sunny. Full sun brings out the red pigmentation of most carnivorous plants. Many carnivorous plants grow quite well out-of-doors or indoors in a bright, sunny spot. Any windowsill, but north, will work fine. The plants also do well under artificial light with a timer set at 12-14 hours. Fluorescent tubes designed for plant growth work better than plain bulbs.

<http://www.carnivorousplantnursery.com> Carnivorous Plant Nursery

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