

Caring for your carnivorous plants: Sundews and Butterworts.

ALWAYS USE DISTILLED WATER FOR THESE PLANTS—the use of tap water, spring water or bottled water other than distilled will kill your plant. The house plant department provides you with a starter bag of distilled water until you can purchase your own gallon of distilled water.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FEED FOOD ITEMS TO YOUR NEW PLANT. This could result in the death of the plant, or in the rotting of some of the leaves. Your plant will feed itself on all the up to now invisible gnats and other visitors in your home or apartment. Your plant will especially enjoy the fruit flies that arrive on summer fruit. When this happens, do not fiddle with your plants sticky leaves to remove dead insect bodies, let nature take it's course.

The sundews and butterworts in the house plant department are tropical plants which enjoy being indoors on windowsills, and sunporches. They are not recommended for barrel bogs or bird baths outdoors; grow the hardier American pitcher plants outside.

BASIC CARE:

LIGHT: Carnivorous plants need at least 4-6 hours of sun to grow well. Grow them in bright sunny South, East or West windows. If you lack bright light, you can grow your plant under plant lights. If you would like to keep your carnivorous plants in the kitchen, put new bulbs in your under the cabinet lights and grow them there.

WATER and HUMIDITY: Your new carnivorous plants grow best using what is called the tray system—keep them sitting in a shallow dish or tray filled with distilled water. Fill up the tray with distilled water when it is close to dry. Do not let your plants dry out. Increase the humidity around your plants by setting glasses or decorative small vases of water around the plants. Be especially attentive when the air conditioning is running as this sucks moisture from the air. If by chance your plant dries out, you can try to rescue it by submerging the pot to the rim in distilled water for an hour or so. Carefully cut off any dry leaves and return to the windowsill.

FLOWERS: Sundews will produce small flowers, but butterworts are known for the large colorful flowers they produce mainly in winter.

BIOLOGY: These carnivorous plants have evolved to grow in areas of acidic peat wetlands where there are few nutrients available for them to absorb directly. Thus they have developed sticky fly paper like leaves to attract and digest prey, and absorb the nutrients.

Much fun information about carnivorous plants can be found on the website of the International Carnivorous Plant Society: <http://www.carnivorousplants.org/>