

# CARNIVOROUS PLANTS



Indoor Sun Shoppe 206-634-3727

## Carnivorous Plant Terrariums

Carnivorous Plant terrariums make beautiful displays and are easy to care for. Temperate and tropical species are compatible as long as adequate light levels are maintained year round and most can use the same soil mix. Terrariums are ideal enclosures for maintaining the swampy, humid environment that most carnies crave.

**Enclosures** - Fancy terrariums are okay but plain old glass aquarium tanks work as well as anything. They don't leak, are made of non-toxic materials, and have simple flat tops to support light fixtures.

**Lighting** - 30 to 40 watts of fluorescent or halide lighting per square foot of enclosure interior is recommended. Incandescent and halogen lights will not do for these plants. Sunlight through a window may suffice when seasonably available. Lighting periods are best kept between 12 and 18 hours in length. If you have an extra deep tank, you may need even higher levels of illumination.

**Water** - Rain water, distilled water or heavily filtered water is necessary for the long haul. You can use tap water in a pinch but over time it will cause problems. Carnies are swamp plants and it is hard to over water them. Keep the water level between 1/2 inch and 3 inches below the surface. A small hole in the soil will act as a "well" to show the water level. We add water 2-3 times a week.

**Soil** - A 50-50 mix of peat or sand and propagation grade Perlite works great - No lime or other additives. Don't use house plant soils.

**Fertilizing** - No-No-No. Your carnies are intolerant of fertilizer and may die from it.

**Temperature** - 50 degrees to 90 degrees

Planting a carni tank is super simple. - Just add about 3 inches of wet carni mix and add the plants. A few stones or drift wood pieces always looks good. When you are finished add more water, if necessary - up to 1/2 inch below the surface, and set up the lighting. Do not cover tank with glass or plastic, this will cause overheating and fungal disease.

**Last thoughts** - If you use only cold temperature (hardy) plants, you can winter your tank cool and dormant, though still bright and wet, in an unheated garage or similar location if you wish. Flytraps may be mounded up slightly in the tank to keep their crown a little further from the water -they like this. Nepenthes should be raised with better drainage. After a couple years the peat moss rots out and its time to divide plants and replant. That's it, basically light, and water.

ENJOY!

What about the bugs? - Your plants will live and grow without eating insects but will take them if available. If it amuses you, give them bugs.

## General Carnivorous Plant Care

**OUTDOORS:** Many species of carnivorous plants are hardy in the Pacific Northwest if planted in large containers or a bog. These include all species of *Sarracenia* (pitcher plants), *Cobra Lily* (*Darlingtonia Californica*) and temperate zone *Droseras* (sundews), *Pinguiculas*, and *Utricularias*. All of these plants can be grown in pots sitting in trays of water. Full sun to partial shade is recommended. Large containers with several species planted together make beautiful and interesting deck or patio displays. Some species (like the Venus Fly Trap) require extra Winter protection outdoors. Remove the pot from the water tray and heap leaves or other organic matter over the plant for the Winter-all species of carnivorous plants will benefit from this treatment. These plants cannot tolerate fertilizers and pure water should only be used. If your water is hard (high mineral content), you should either filter it or purchase purified water. A special soil mix of peat moss and coarse sand or perlite is necessary-these plants will not withstand the lime and fertilizers present in most potting mixes.

**INDOORS:** Both tropical and temperate carnivorous plants can be grown indoors under fluorescent grow lights or in a sunny window. Tropical species will keep growing year around while the temperate types often show a partial or complete Winter dormancy, and reappear from the crown or roots in the Spring. Indoor plants, except *Nepenthes* (tropical pitcher plants) should stand in water all year round. The water should be changed occasionally to prevent build-up of salts in the soil. Aquariums make great containers for carnivorous plants indoors. Temperate zone plants tend to better if given a cool rest in Winter. Cool greenhouses, glassed porches, unheated garages or basements are all suitable if well lit-or a person can place them outdoors and mulch them with organic matter (leaves).

**FEEDING:** Outdoors, carnivorous plants will catch all of the insects they need with no help. Indoors, pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*) may be fed live or dead insects. Sundews and *Pinguiculas* catch mostly small gnats, which always seem to be present as they like to breed in their wet soil. Aquarium Sundews and *Pinguicula* have a steady supply of food hatching at all times. (They don't really need to be fed at all). Flytraps only actually need a meal or two a year to survive, but don't mind eating more. They should only be fed LIVE insects. NEVER tease the traps to close because they only have 5-6 times before that trap will die off.