

PRETTY PREDATORS

> Right around Thanksgiving, a cheeky meme circulated on social media, announcing the arrival of “the 2020 poinsettias.” (The post featured Audrey II, the enormous Venus flytrap with an appetite for human blood, of *Little Shop of Horrors* fame.) In reality, of course, carnivorous plants feast on insects and arachnids, not people — and they actually have many admirers, due to their striking looks, pest-reducing benefits and simple care and handling needs.



DIONAEA M. 'RED DRAGON'
(VENUS FLYTRAP)
California Carnivores



DROSERA CAPENSIS
(CAPE SUNDEW)
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



SARRACENIA X BRUNSWICK BEAUTY
(AMERICAN PITCHER PLANT, HYBRID)
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



CEPHALOTUS FOLLICULARIS (AUSTRALIAN PITCHER PLANT)
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



VENUS FLYTRAP WITH SUNDEWS
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



DIONAEA M. 'SEEDGROWN' (VENUS FLYTRAP)
California Carnivores



SARRACENIA 'DANA'S DELIGHT' X ALATA 'NIGHT'
(AMERICAN PITCHER PLANT, HYBRID)
California Carnivores

Fresh Choices

“They’re so charismatic,” said Damon Collingsworth, co-owner of California Carnivores. “They’re famous for catching bugs, but they caught my affection a long time ago.” An 11-year-old Collingsworth purchased his first carnivorous plant (a Cape sundew) at a flea market from his now business partner, Peter D’Amato, author of the award-winning book, *The Savage Garden*. He later managed the nursery at Malesiana Tropicals in Borneo before building California Carnivores into the country’s largest botanical collection of carnivorous plants.

Although popular with aristocrats in Victorian England, carnivorous plants were long considered “weird” stateside, Collingsworth said. Recently however, demand has exploded. “2020 was our busiest year ever,” he said. “I think all biology-oriented products and hobbies have taken off during the pandemic, as people crave being around living things.” The public’s obsession with houseplants, which has grown steadily over the past decade, has helped fuel interest, he added, as certain genera (*Drosera* and *Pinguicula*, commonly known as sundews and butterworts) catch fungus gnats — small flies that often infest the soil of potted plants. Others, such as *Sarracenia*, *Nepenthes* and *Cephalotus* (pitcher plants), help combat some more vicious bugs, including mosquitos, ants and wasps.

Native to swamps and bogs, carnivorous plants evolved in environments absent of fertilized soil and can only tolerate very pure water (rain or distilled). Most can handle a wide range of temperatures, from 15 F to 100 F or more, and thrive on a sunny windowsill. (If you are in an especially frigid location, Collingsworth advises bringing them into a garage rather than a home or shop with the heat running full blast.) Many carnivorous plants go dormant in the winter, “but so long as you keep giving them distilled water, they’ll come back and you can totally enjoy them for a lifetime,” he said.

A great way to merchandise carnivorous plants — and set your customers up for success — is to keep them in an open terrarium. “It is important to duplicate their habitat as closely as possible,” said Michael Szesze, owner of the Carnivorous Plant Nursery in Smithsburg, Maryland, and founding father and curator for the Mid-Atlantic Carnivorous Plant Society. “Open terrariums keep the moisture and humidity up and allow the plants free access to insects.” He recommends misting the soil with a bottle of distilled water once a week and placing the terrarium in a spot that receives bright, but indirect light. “Close to a window or near a bright fluorescent light is good,” he said.

Here are a few amateur-friendly options to learn and love. 🌱

Katie Vincent is the senior contributing editor and writer of *Floral Management*.



SARRACENIA LEUCOPHYLLA
(AMERICAN PITCHER PLANT)
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



PINGUICULA (BUTTERWORT, EARLY STAGE)
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



NEPENTHES X MIRANDA (TROPICAL PITCHER PLANT, HYBRID)
Carnivorous Plant Nursery



NEPENTHES HAMATA (TROPICAL PITCHER PLANT)
California Carnivores



DROSERA FILIFORMIS (THREAD-LEAVED SUNDEW)
California Carnivores



PINGUICULA MORANENSIS X CYCLOSECTA (MEXICAN BUTTERWORT, HYBRID)
California Carnivores