

## Meat-Eating Plants

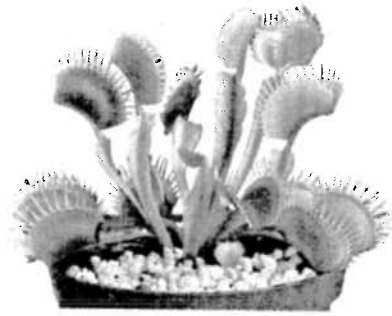
Have you ever watched a movie where a plant attacks a person? Vines snake out, curl around the hero's ankles, and drag him in. You laugh because you know that plants don't eat animals. But guess what—some do! Meat-eating, or *carnivorous*, plants include Venus flytraps, pitcher plants, and sundews. A few of these plants **snare** animals as large as mice, but most eat only insects. That's why they are sometimes called *insectivorous* plants.

Most carnivorous plants live in wet *habitats* such as bogs or swamps. All that water **leaches minerals** from the soil, so the plants get their **nutrients** from meat instead. They use scents and colors to attract small insects. The insects land on the plant, hoping to find food. Instead, they find big trouble!

Imagine a fly **flitting** over a bog. It detects the delicious odor of rotting meat and follows the scent to a plant that looks like a pitcher, or jug. The fly slips easily under a leaf that covers the pitcher like a lid. Once inside, the fly realizes that it has made an error. It tries to escape, but it can't find a way out. It lands on the slippery interior wall of the pitcher where tiny downward-pointing hairs prevent it from climbing up. Finally, the exhausted fly falls into the pool of liquid at the bottom of the pitcher and drowns.

Other carnivorous plants have more active ways of getting food. Venus flytraps have leaves that open like a book. Each leaf has a few hairs that act as *triggers*. When an insect touches the hairs, the leaves clamp together, trapping the insect inside.

Once an insect is caught, juices called **enzymes** begin to digest it, and within a few days, the insect's body is gone. Now the carnivorous plant has the nutrients it needs to grow!



The leaves of the Venus flytrap snap shut to trap its prey.

### MONDAY

Write each word next to its definition.

enzymes

flitting

leaches

minerals

nutrients

snare

- \_\_\_\_\_ removes or takes from
- \_\_\_\_\_ chemicals in living things that help in processes such as digestion
- \_\_\_\_\_ substances that living things need to grow
- \_\_\_\_\_ flying quickly from place to place
- \_\_\_\_\_ to catch something in a trap
- \_\_\_\_\_ natural substances that do not come from plants or animals

# TUESDAY

Choose an italicized word from the article and write its definition. Use a dictionary if you need help.

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# WEDNESDAY

Choose the correct answer.

- Where do most carnivorous plants live?  
 (A) boreal forests  
 (B) grasslands  
 (C) rain forests  
 (D) swamps or bogs
- What prevents an insect from escaping from a pitcher plant?  
 (A) downward-pointing hairs  
 (B) slippery interior walls  
 (C) a lid covers the exit  
 (D) all of the above
- Which carnivorous plant has leaves that snap shut to trap insects?  
 (A) sundew  
 (B) Venus flytrap  
 (C) pitcher plant  
 (D) bug-catcher bush

# THURSDAY

Write the letter of each cause next to its matching effect.

## Causes

- A The fly cannot escape from the pitcher plant.
- B A fly smells the scent of rotting meat.
- C There aren't many nutrients in swamp soil.
- D An insect touches trigger hairs on a leaf.

## Effects

- \_\_\_\_\_ The leaf snaps shut and traps the insect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The fly follows the scent to a pitcher plant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some plants eat insects to get nutrients.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It falls into liquid and drowns.

# FRIDAY

Research and write about carnivorous plants called sundews.

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