



**Flesh-eating plants?** Carnivory (from Latin *carnis*, flesh, and *vorare*, to devour) sounds like a rare plant feature. But it occurs in at least 9 families, 19 genera, and 600 species.

North America is home to 3 genera of carnivorous plants found no where else.



**Venus flytrap**

**Pitcher plant**

**Cobra lily**

**Scientific name:** *Dionaea muscipula*

*Sarracenia* (~8 species)

*Darlingtonia californica*

**Range:** e USA (NC, SC)\*

e USA, Canada

nw USA (CA, OR)

**Habitat:** coastal plains, pocosin, pine savannas

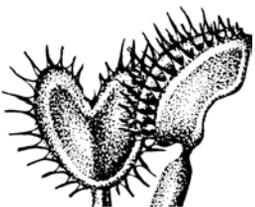
bogs, swamps, open pine forests, wetlands

bogs, border of springs, wet areas with cool running water

Flytraps (family Droseraceae) and pitcher plants and cobra lilies (family Sarraceniaceae) are endemic. Other carnivorous plants in North America include sundews (*Drosera*, family Droseraceae), butterworts and bladderworts (*Pinguicula* and *Utricularia*, family Lentibulariaceae), and *Catopsis berteroniana* (family Bromeliaceae). \*introduced FL, DE, NJ

**Why are plants carnivorous?** Most plants absorb nitrogen and other nutrients from the soil through their roots. Carnivorous plants live in nutrient-poor soils. They get additional nitrogen by absorbing animal prey through their modified leaves.

**How do carnivorous plants catch prey?** Color, odor, nectar, glistening globules, ultraviolet guides, or translucent patterns lure animals into a trap. Once trapped, the prey (insects, slugs, spiders, tadpoles, and other animals) are digested by special glands.



### snap traps

Prey touch the trigger hairs and spring the trap.

Fangs on the leaf margin form a cage preventing escape.

### sticky traps

Prey land on stalked glands sticky with mucilage and are quickly stuck.

Some species have leaves that also curl around the prey.



### pitfall traps

Slippery when wet! Prey stumble, tumble, and even aquaplane on slippery inner walls, falling into a deep pitcher filled with rain water, digestive enzymes, and prey debris.



### suction traps

Aquatic prey touch trigger hairs and open a trap door to a tiny, water-filled sac.

As the prey is sucked in, the door shuts behind it.

