

Venus Flytrap Basic Care



Grow Flytraps outside all year if at all possible. They need LOTS of light. At least 4 hrs of direct sunlight per day is best, with bright light the remainder of the day. It is possible to grow flytraps under fluorescent lighting, keep it within 8 - 10 inches of them. The photo period needs to change with the seasons but let the lights run a couple hours longer than current daylight hours. The red varieties will not do well under artificial lighting. Most of the flytraps will get red in them, some just in the trap and others all over. If they are not getting enough light the red will not show. If they are light deprived the result is long stringy growth.

Acceptable soil is sphagnum peat moss, perlite and silica sand. A 50/50 peat/perlite mix does fine. You can add up to 1/3 silica sand if you like. You never want sand to exceed 1/3 of any mix or it will raise the ph of the soil. The soil must be nutrient free or it will burn their roots. This is why they eat bugs, to get nutrients. They grow in nutrient free acidic soil, the peat is what provides the acidic soil. They can be top dressed with long fiber sphagnum moss to dress up the pot some if you like. They can also grow in 100% long fiber sphagnum moss but you have to keep a closer eye on moisture content.

Water must be bottled or reverse osmosis “Sodium Free”. Rain water is ok too, but not collected off the roof. Some people use AC condensation.

Flytraps grown outside in bright light can take slightly wet conditions. Flytraps grown inside or in low light must be kept just damp or they will rot. Flytraps are notorious for rotting. Don't stand indoor flytraps in water constantly, instead fill the water tray ½ full and let the water in the tray disappear for a day or two before adding more. Outside flytraps can stand in water all the time if they are in direct sunlight at least part of the day. **Just don't let them dry out.** When they enter dormancy the soil must be kept just barely damp, too wet and they will rot.

Plant them so only the lower half of the bulb is covered, never bury the growth points. I fill the pot with soil and pack it down slightly. Then I make a hole with my finger, a spoon handle, forceps, plant stakes or whatever is handy. Then just insert the flytrap into the hole. Fill the hole with soil and gently water while holding the flytrap. The soil will wash around the roots, if you don't hold the flytrap it may sink some. Slightly pack the soil down and finish filling to desired level. Gently water again to settle the soil around the roots, keep adding more media as necessary. Flytraps can live a long time in 4" pots but 6" are better, especially for mature ones. **You should use 6" and larger pots for flytraps grown outside.** This allows them to root in well so they can take the winter temperatures. The colder your winter the larger the pot you should use.

Humidity really doesn't matter much to Flytraps. Simply growing them in moist soil raises the humidity around the plants anyway. They will grow outside just fine anyplace that has warm summers and cool to cold winters. If you do live someplace extremely dry you can build a bog to plant carnivorous plants in. The bog will increase the humidity around the plants. Flytraps are great candidates for terrariums and fish bowls too. Just keep in mind they need lots of light, so no matter how you grow them you need to make sure this requirement is met. Signs of low humidity are small traps and sluggish closing of the trap. Both are also signs of dormancy, so keep that in mind too. Low light can also produce small traps.

Once they are dormant let the soil dry to just barely moist or they will rot. Flytraps do not need much light once dormant, a garage or shed makes a great place to store them over the winter. Winter temps of at least 45°F are best for dormancy.

If you put them someplace where they do not get much light during dormancy treat them with a fungicide.

Flytraps put out a shorter/wider leaf in the spring/fall. When it goes dormant growth is greatly reduced or stopped, but it usually retains some of its foliage. If all of the flytrap is black and withered it is probably dead, but if any of the bulb is alive it can come back. Numerous leaves can wither and die while dormant, in colder climates this is normal. But it should retain some green leaves at least to some degree.

Flytraps will try to enter dormancy when they need to no mater what the conditions are. Signs of a flytrap trying to enter dormancy in warm weather is slowed growth and the traps either stop working or work very slow. This will usually happen after it produces shorter wider leaves, but not always. If you keep watering and treating it like a non-dormant plant it will die. During this time it absolutely must be allowed to dry to just moist.

Flytraps are fairly easy to propagate. You can use the flower stalk or leaves for cuttings. Treat both like any other cp leaf cutting. You want to pluck, not cut, the leaf from the bulb. Use a downward tug. Your goal is to get the leaf with some of the white rhizome. Cut the trap off and lay the leaf on a peat based media and place a pinch of soil over the white part. You want as much of the back side of the cutting in contact with the media as possible. Use a propagation chamber and keep the humidity in the 70-80% range and place in bright light. Try to avoid heat buildup. Success should be around 50% or better. Cuttings are the fastest way to create mature flytraps. **Division is another good way to get more plants.** You can cut new growth points free from the original bulb when they have their own roots. Mature flytraps generally produce one or more new growth points each growing season. Generally any piece of bulb with roots will take off and produce a new plant.

Flytraps require a winter dormancy of 3 or 4 months. This is triggered by a shorter photo-period and cooling temps. Most of them can take winter temps well below freezing. If your winters only get down to 25°F or a little colder they can be left outside all year. If it gets colder you need to winterize them. Winterized correctly they can take temps near zero. If it doesn't get cold enough you can put them in the fridge for 6 - 8 weeks when they start to show signs of dormancy.

Venus Flytrap Basic Information

Flytraps are very easy to take care of so long as you know their requirements. They grow naturally in the United States in the Carolinas'. They grow in most any acidic wetland area and have been successfully introduced into other locations. Sometimes the areas they grow in are flooded and the flytraps remain under water for several days, sometimes catching prey while underwater! **If your flytrap is under bug attack you can generally submerge it in water for a few days to rid them.** Allow the pot to drain well when you remove it.

One thing most people don't know about **flytraps** is that they **can move**. They can raise themselves up if they are planted to deep and they can scoot short distances. It is a far cry from walking around, it is a plant you know. But slight movement and adjustment is common. Super cool.

The flytrap is probably the most known carnivorous plant. It is very easy to grow if you provide it with enough light and let it enter dormancy. It is a superb insect catcher, I have witnessed them catching caterpillars three times the trap size. And they are great at catching flies too, of course. **You do not want to feed your flytrap.** Hamburger, chocolate and all the rest of the human food will kill the trap and possibly make the plant sick. Even feeding them dead insects should be avoided, most often the flytrap does not recognize them as food. The trap uses movement inside the trap to confirm it has caught something. Traps generally re-open within 24 hrs if nothing was caught, 2 - 10 days if something was. It does an excellent job at catching its own food. And even though you are dying to watch a trap function you should **resist the urge to trigger one. The traps can only close a few times and then it dies.**

Flytraps have flowers much like most of the carnivorous plants. They are white and around 1/2" - 3/4" wide. **They flower in spring shortly after coming out of dormancy.** Flytraps can self seed and self pollinate but its best if you help with pollination. Flytrap flowers have a center anther where you must deposit the pollen. Wait until the anther opens, it will have tiny hair like filaments coming from it making it easy to notice. If your flytraps are grown inside you should cut off the flower stalks. **Flowering takes a lot of energy and it can kill** plants grown in lower light. If your flytrap is growing outside in full sunlight flowering shouldn't bother it much. I still wouldn't let it flower several times in a row though. The flower stalk can be used as a cutting.



Flytraps are generally sold by age. The flytraps we sell are either of flowering age or will be next growing season. Most others list them at 3 yrs and older. **Flytraps take 5 - 7 years to reach maturity from seed.** This can be reduced by starting them in tissue culture, generally 1 - 2 years. First year flytraps have very small traps, an 1/8 of an inch or so. They will almost double in size every year until full size is achieved, generally in the 1" range. Once a flytrap seed germinates it usually puts out a non-carnivorous leaf. Its just a small leaf to get photosynthesis going and to get the seed shell out of the way. The next leaf is usually a tiny trap, but it works being capable of catching tiny gnats or larva. Flytraps in the 3 - 4 year range are the most commonly available. They are big enough to enjoy but need another couple of years to be full size and to flower. Flytraps can get bigger even after they reach flowering age. **A flytrap well taken care of can live for 30 years or more.**

If you want to grow flytraps from seed you need to have patience. Sow them mid winter and grow them inside until weather permits taking them outdoors. Damp off usually attacks the seeds when they germinate, so treat them with a fungicide. Or tissue culture your seeds, by far the best way to start any seeds. If you tissue culture your seeds you not only increase their survival rate but you speed up their growth. Often giving them a year or two head start.

Nurseries vary as to how they grow flytraps. Most often they are grown in large containers, often in clumps. They can be grown outside in the open or in greenhouses, it just depends on the company and area. They harvest them as needed, this isn't any different than field collecting so far as shock goes. Hopefully they place them in the greenhouse potted up for 6 - 8 weeks to ensure the transition goes well. Luckily flytraps are pretty hardy plants.

Most of the flytraps all grow alike. They all need lots of light and a winter dormancy. The main differences are the traps and colorings. There are a lot of cultivars available today, some official and some not. I'm not even going to try to list all of them, but I will cover some of the most common.

Here are some of the types of flytraps and who created them if I know:

Dionaea Muscipula "Typical" - This is the main type that grows naturally. The leaves can get around 4 - 6 inches long with traps up to 1" or so. All of the plant is green except for two red half moons inside the trap. In brighter light the red is more pronounced and fills the trap to the margins.



Dionaea Muscipula "All Green" - This is just like the typical form except it has no red on it, anywhere.

Dionaea 'Akai Ryu' {R.Gagliardo} - Also called **Red Dragon**. This flytrap is dark maroon to burgundy. All of it. In lower light it will not be as deep a color or parts may become green. Their size is comparable with typical flytraps.

Dionaea 'Big Mouth' {T.Camilleri} - Also called **Red Purple**. These produce large traps on shorter leaves. The traps can reach 1 1/2". Coloring is much like the typical form but a red purple color.

Dionaea 'Clayton's Red Sunset' {C.Clayton} -

Dionaea 'Clumping Cultivar' {D'Amato} - These grow about like the typical type except it produces clumps of rosetted growing points. Or numerous growth points from one bulb. This makes them grow in large clumps.

Dionaea 'Dentate' or Dente {D'Amato} - These are created in tissue culture. They have numerous short jagged teeth. Reminds you of a beartrap. The coloring can be much like the typical form or it can have more red in it.

Dionaea 'Fused Tooth' {D'Amato} - Also created in tissue culture. They have a few teeth that are not prominent and they are connected by "webbing".

Dionaea 'Red Piranha' {E.Read} - Size about the same as typical. This one grows all red and has teeth like a piranha.

Dionaea 'Royal Red' {AUPBR 464} - This is an awesome looking flytrap. All of it is red except the margins of the trap, which are green. One of the bigger flytraps too.

Dionaea 'Sawtooth' {B.Meyers-Rice} - The traps look much like a saw blade, thus its name. Coloration and size comparable to the typical form. May be confused with fused tooth, these have more teeth and they are more pronounced.

Please see www.world-of-carnivores.com for more information. We have guides for care, propagation, seed collecting, pollination and tissue culture. Should you not find the answer on the website feel free to post on our forum.