

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

Starke Ayres Garden Centres caters for the individual who wants a single Venus fly trap, the beginner and the enthusiast who is looking for rare carnivorous plant for their home or business.



Tropical pitcher plant (*Nepenthes* vine pitcher) area of nursery

In the past couple of years carnivorous plants have found more than a niche market and can be found in most large retail nurseries, pet shops and even some supermarkets. They are not only unusual and beautiful; they also have a much defined function, and blur the lines between plant and animal in that they are passive hunters of their own food. Insectivorous plants are very effective predators of insects, which any collector will verify. Predation occurs where the plants use colour, hormones, nectar mucilage and other baits to lure their prey, mostly flying and crawling insects into one of the snap, pitfall, lobster pot, pigeon or suction traps, where they are digested and the plant absorbs its nitrogen. Some of the large *Nepenthes* (tropical vine pitchers or monkey cups) species and their large growing hybrids have been known to catch small vertebrates like mice and rats.

Some of the *Sarracenia* (American trumpet pitchers) grow long pitchers that can reach a meter or more with beautiful colours and contrasting veining making them sought after in the flower arranging industry. A pot of well grown *Sarracenia* will always get a double take, as with a well grown *Nepenthes* pitcher plant with many cascading colourful pitchers.



Some *Sarracenia* (American pitcher) plants and a *Nepenthes* (tropical vine pitcher)

With a new found priority for green techniques, such as organically grown food and solar power, carnivorous plants are the green answer to the control of flying insects such as mosquitoes, flies and even roaches without the use of ultrasonic interference or poison. A natural solution.

Over the years cultivars and hybrids have been produced to combine ease of growth, vigour and beauty, with the result that you can now buy plants that will flourish and grow on your windowsill, will feed themselves while ridding the area of pests to boot. Some varieties of carnivorous plants are happier outside and lure their prey away from the house to where they are. American pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*) can eat so many flies that the pitchers fall over.



A *Sarracenia* and a large species of *Nepenthes*

The modern day Venus fly trap has also gone through a metamorphosis with a myriad of clones having been developed, so many in fact that there are collectors that just collect them alone. There are clones that grow traps that can reach 5cm in length and still others where the entire plant is all red. Venus fly traps are the most popular and sought after carnivorous plants. Named cultivars such as 'sharks teeth', 'red dragon', and 'B52' from left to right below being just a very few of the many popular clones.



The sticky sundews are yet another branch of the spreading tree of the carnivorous plant family, with hundreds of species in the family, being found on almost every continent except the Arctic. They specialize in trapping their prey in a sticky nectar like mucilage which is also the means of attracting and digesting the prey. Although not as spectacular as the flytraps, trumpet or vine pitchers, but they do have an appeal of their own and a definite purpose, trapping mostly ants, mosquitoes and flies.



Cape sundew with fly

Cape sundew (*Drosera capensis*)



Above are sundews *D. binata*-Australia, *D. admirabilis*-South Africa and *D. adelae*-Australia

Other carnivorous plants propagated by Pan's carnivores but not considered commercially are *Pinguicula*, *Heliophora*, *Darlingtonia* and *Cephalotus*, and are considered collectors plants for experienced growers.



Pinguicula

Heliophora

Darlingtonia

Starke Ayres Garden Centres supplies young well established, weather hardened plants at affordable prices to the retail market, and the general public and collectors alike.

Plants range from a commercial range of plants, which consists of easier to grow species and hybrids of Venus fly traps (*Dionaea*), Sundews (*Drosera*), American trumpet pitchers (*Sarracenia*) and monkey cups (*Nepenthes* vine pitchers). Many of these plants as already mentioned were selected for their ease of growth, vigorous growth behaviour and beauty, some of which can be easily grown on your windowsill, right through to the ultra rare species and hybrids that are in many cases suited for collectors with some experience.

The commercial selection of plants is mostly cultivated via tissue culture and generally stocks are good.

Please enquire should you be in search of something special or wish to enquire what we have in stock.

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