

# Keys to raising carnivorous plants

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## basics

- These plants live naturally in conditions with no nutrients in the soil. Therefore, they must catch their nutrients (especially nitrogen which is in the form of protein).
- Never, ever give them standard fertilizer. This will kill them.
- Water must be exceptionally clean. Palo Alto/San Francisco (much of tap water is exceptionally clean, coming from Yosemite (Hetch Hetchy Reservoir). Many other towns in the area are also supplied by the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir (Menlo Park, Sunnyvale, Millbrae, Mountain View, Redwood City, San Mateo, etc). The total dissolved solids from the tap here is 12-20. Distilled water is 0. Bottled drinking water is anywhere from 120-200. San Jose tap water is in the 300s. Carnivorous plants require water <100, ideally less than 50. So you should only use: distilled water, tap water, or rain water.
- Soil is without nutrients. 3 parts washed peat moss, 1 part washed silica sand, and 1 part perlite. Dry perlite and silica sand should only be poured while wearing a filter mask as inhaling this can be hazardous to your health. If you need to repot, we are happy to help you as we have the soil mix.
- Plants should sit in a saucer. The soil should be moist, but not soggy wet at all times. It's best to have water in the saucer most of the time. It's easiest to make sure there is at least 1 inch of water in the saucer at all times.
- These plants like sun. They need to be outside if possible.
- In the winter time, once the rains begin, you can remove the saucer. If there are prolonged days without rain, you may need to place saucer under plant and water the saucer. Plants will get small over the winter time. It's normal dormancy.
- Always bottom water (meaning water the saucer, not the plant from above).
- For the venus fly trap, it's natural for traps to turn black after a few meals or just after a few weeks. It will make new traps. Food must be alive for it to digest. It must be moving or it will close and then re-open without digesting. It takes 3-7 days for a meal to digest. The trap will re-open and can digest 2-3 meals before the trap dies. It only needs to eat once a month. There is no need to feed it. It will catch it's own. **Do not play with the traps or feed it human food.**
- Don't throw a plant away if the leaves die back. The Venus flytrap will naturally shrink during the winter and slow its growth. If you think it's dead, unless you let it dry out, it will probably come back.