

How to Grow: Venus Fly Trap

Dionaea muscipula

Carnivorous Plant Care:

ENVIRONMENT: The Venus Fly Trap likes very high humidity and swamp-like conditions. Good choices include an open top terrarium, an old aquarium or fish bowl, or use the tray method.: The "tray method" is simply a method wherein you place pots in a tray that has standing water in it. You can also sit the Venus Fly Trap atop a watering tray that has pebbles in it, thus holding the pot right above the water. Don't cover the entire top because air needs to circulate.

SOIL: They also like acidic soil, so it's best to use a mixture that includes sand and sphagnum moss. They grow very slowly so it should be several years before this plant would need transplanting.

LIGHT: Make sure to place your Venus Fly Trap in an area that is bright, but the plant will likely do best if it is kept out of direct sunlight. You need to watch your terrarium in the summer because the temperature inside the glass could get too hot, which will burn the plant.

WATER: They should be monitored, especially during hot and dry weather, to ensure that their growing medium does not dry out completely. The growing medium ideally should be just moist, not soggy or waterlogged. Therefore, the tray method is best used while the plants are in direct sunlight in hot weather, or when one goes on vacation, to ensure that the medium does not dry out. However, because the plants are sensitive to chemicals, be sure to water them only with distilled water or rain water. If you are going to use tap water, allow it to sit in an open container for a day or two.

DORMANT: In the winter months, between Thanksgiving-Valentine's Day, Venus Fly Traps may go dormant for about three months. When this happens, the plant should be stored in an area where the temperature is between 45-50 degrees F.

FEEDING: Like other plants, Venus Fly Traps gather nutrients from the air and soil. However, they thrive in poor soil and are healthier if they get nutrients from insects, which they only need to eat two or three times a month. Unnecessarily tripping the plant's food trap, either with food or your finger or a stick, can cause the plant to die because it drains its energy and makes its trigger hairs less sensitive. If you grow your plant outside, it will get enough insects to eat. If you grow it inside, you will probably need to feed it insects. Common insects to feed Venus Fly Traps include common houseflies, small slugs, or crickets. Insects can be alive or dead, but make sure not to give the plants insects that were killed by pesticides or other chemicals. If the insect is already dead, you'll probably need to gently squeeze the trap and move the food around so it imitates the action of a live insect. Never feed your carnivorous plant raw meat, such as hamburger, because indigestion, rot and death will occur, find a "just rightly sized" bug instead! Do not fertilize at all.

MAINTENANCE: When a "leaf" trap dies, it will turn black, then rot and drop off. Simply remove the dead leaf.