



## Venus Fly Traps



Venus fly traps are fascinating plants, thought to be strange and exotic. They originate from the ‘exotic’ region of the North and South Carolina swamps and grasslands. Most people don’t have good luck with them, usually because they don’t know that these wonderful plants take special care.

Fly traps need to be watered with distilled water or rainwater. The minerals in ground water will rot their roots. Being native to swamplands, they’re used to water absent of any minerals or nutrients. They also need to be constantly wet. It’s best to sit its pot into a dish of distilled water and keep water in the dish at all times. They don’t like regular soil. They grow best in either sphagnum moss or a mixture of sand and peat moss. They like a warm, sunny window, east or south facing. But, they cannot handle the heat from a houses heating system or stove in the winter. It’s best to sit them outside in the winter. Put them outside just before Thanksgiving and bring them in after Valentine’s Day, or whenever you start and stop heating your house. They usually go dormant in the winter, so it may look like your plant has died, but if you take good care of it, it will come back in the spring. In my experience, the biggest problems in them surviving the winter is putting them where the wind won’t blow them away, the animals won’t get to them, and you remember to water them. Don’t worry if it gets too cold. In their natural habitat they’re often covered in frost during the winter.

Your fly traps will catch little bugs that cross into them and, yes, when they get big enough, they will catch flies. You can feed them yourself if you wish. You can stick a tiny piece of meat in there and wiggle it around until the trap closes. Be careful though. You don’t want to make a trap close if there’s no food in there. Each trap can only close up to three times. Then that leaf will die back and another one will come up. If a plant has to send up new leaves too many times without getting the nitrogen it needs from food, it can be very hard on the plant. So, no sticking your fingers inside to watch it close. When taken care of Venus fly traps are a beautiful and rewarding addition to your house.

Submitted by: Tammy Cripe, UC Master Gardener of Glenn County