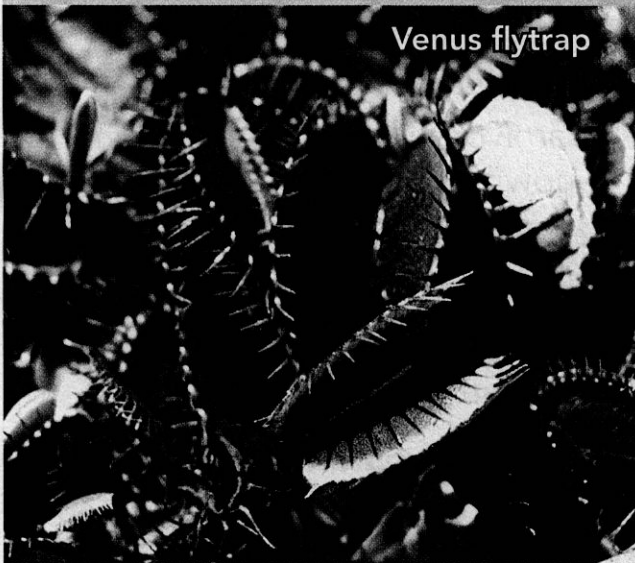


Animal-eating plants

1. Plants that eat animals? How can this possibly be true? They don't even have teeth!
2. Plants that eat meat are known as carnivorous plants. Of course, you won't see carnivorous plants munching on a juicy piece of steak or dining on a slice of roast chicken! They usually eat meat in the form of insects or insect larvae.
3. There are more than 500 different species of carnivorous plants. Each has different ways of attracting, capturing, killing and digesting meals—but all have these behaviours in common. Carnivorous plants digest their prey using special enzymes, similar to those found in the human stomach. Small insects usually take a few hours to digest, while larger ones can take a week or longer. After the prey has been digested, all that remains is a mass of leftover crunchy bits! These are ejected by the plant and it is ready for another meal.



Venus flytrap

4. The **Venus flytrap** is probably the most well-known carnivorous plant. Its leaves are actually 'traps' held open like a clamshell. Insects are attracted to the plant by the sweet nectar on the leaves. When an insect lands on a leaf, the trap snaps shut.
5. A **pitcher plant** has trumpet-shaped leaves that collect rainwater. Sweet substances around the rim of each 'trumpet' attract insects. Insects enter the plant and then slide down the slippery slope to drown in the rainwater—and are then digested by the plant.
6. Sweet nectar also lures insects to the **sundew plant**. The leaves have hairs that ooze a sticky substance. When an insect becomes stuck to the leaf, the hairs wrap around it. Eventually the insect suffocates and is digested.
7. A **bladderwort** grows partly underwater. It has hundreds of little flask-shaped bladders on its stems and leaves. Large yellow or purplish flowers attract insects such as mosquitoes. When the insect touches the sensitive hairs around the edge of the bladder, the sides spring outwards and the insect is pulled inside and trapped.
8. Did you know that some species of carnivorous plants are climbing vines that can grow to 20 metres in length? These plants have been known to eat creatures as large as small lizards, frogs, mice and even small birds!



pitcher plant

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