

General Cultivation Guide

This is a very general guide to the cultivation of most of the carnivorous plants you are likely to encounter for sale. It is not intended to cover all aspects and inevitably some species will have more specific requirements which are beyond the scope of this document. Some further details are in the individual guides. Other information is available from the many specialist books on the subject that are available either through the Carnivorous Plant Society or online sellers.

Light

Most carnivorous plants thrive in full direct sunlight. In cultivation this is usually best achieved by a greenhouse though a conservatory will often be as good. Beware of conservatories that receive direct sunlight most of the day as they can get extremely hot. During the summer it is important to ventilate a greenhouse to prevent overheating but if this is either impractical or ineffective some shading can be used. A sunny windowsill can also be used for many species of carnivorous plants though the light levels even on the brightest windowsills may not be high enough for some species. In particular tall growing *Sarracenia* species may suffer in these situations.

Water

It's a general rule of thumb that tap water in most areas is not suitable for carnivorous plants. Most carnivorous plants grow in acidic soils and hard water can be very harmful but also chlorine and other chemicals in tap water can cause damage. The safest type of water is rainwater collected in buckets or water butts. In an emergency tap water can be used though—it's better than no water at all after all.

Soil/Compost

Traditionally carnivorous plants have been grown in mixtures containing sphagnum peat. Sphagnum peat is harvested from peat bogs and these are recognised as important ecosystems. The use of peat has long been recognised to be undesirable in general gardening and there is a move towards substituting for more environmentally friendly products. Carnivorous plant growers have long claimed that their use of peat is a special case because there is no suitable substitute. With many coir products now on the market this can no longer be a valid excuse.



Drosera anglica

Photo—Tim Bailey



Pinguicula grandiflora

Photo—Tim Bailey

Coir is available either as bags or compressed and dried bales. Usually the latter form is the most commonly found. To use a block put it in water and as it absorbs the water it expands. Coir is more fibrous than peat and is a good substitute in most respects except one, which is that it is not as acidic as peat. To get around this problem coir can be blended with a peat product called Moorland Gold. This is a by-product of the water industry where water that drains over peat is filtered for public consumption. Rather than disposing of this filtered peat it is sold for horticulture. It is not actually a sustainable product but its use is acceptable because it is a by-product rather than being specifically cut from peat bogs. For more details see the "Growing without Peat" Care Sheet.