Collectors Corner Fact Sheet

THE VENUS FLY TRAP (Dionaea Muscipula)


Typical summer leaf

Venus Fly Traps, like most carnivorous (insect eating) plants, live in soils that are low in nutrients as a result VFT's are capable of getting these missing nutrients from live insects. Although they don't need to eat meat to survive, it helps them stay healthy. Venus Fly Traps live in moist damp sandy or peat based soils near swamps or bogs of the South-east of North America where summer temperatures can be very hot and winters very cold. They are able to grow on the sides of roads and railway lines where little else can survive.

Venus Fly Traps attract insects with their brightly coloured leaves and sweet scent. The plants have specially modified leaves that spring shut when they sense an insect moving in the leaf, this ensures their victim doesn't escape. Inside the trap are short trigger hairs that when touched twice the cause the leaf to shut, in warm weather this can be very fast. The more the insect wriggles, the tighter it is gripped. The struggling insect actually helps the plant release the digestive fluids that will dissolve the internal organs of the insect in order to feed the plant. The trap re-opens after about 10 days, but all that remains of the insect is its skeleton, which is soon washed or blown away. The trap is then ready for another tasty insect! A healthy leaf will live for 3 to 5 months and continue to collect insects. Dead insects will not be eaten by the trap.

Position

Flytraps are best grown outdoors in full sun or partial shade. The leaves will last longer and retain the bright colours if they are grown outdoors. Flytraps will grow very well in glasshouse without heating, in shade houses and ferneries the plants will not be as strong or grow as large. Flytraps are often used as bog plants in fish ponds but they should not be immersed in the water, in colder climates growth is slowed if kept in water all year. The strength and shape of the leaf is controlled by the amount of sunlight the plant receives and in full sun the leaf will be very red and succulent, in excessive shade the leaf will be thin long and weak. More exposure will make the leaf shorter and stronger. Flytraps may also be grown indoors provided the plants are kept moist with adequate ventilation and light, some growers do very well growing VFT in terrariums. Flytraps prefer colder climates as they require a winter dormant period for optimum growth and will tolerate frosts and very cold conditions while resting. Over winter plants will loose most of their summer leaves and grow only very small leaves until spring when the plant quickly recovers.

Watering

The potting media must be kept moist to wet throughout the whole year period. Watering can be reduced during the winter dormancy period. If temperatures are high, it is very important to keep the media wet otherwise the plant will suffer or die. Stand the pot in a wide saucer or tray of water up to 1 cm deep in the worst of the summer heat. It is preferable to use rain or distilled water if you are in an area with poor drinking water. If using tap water it is necessary to rinse the soil and water tray every month or sp to prevent a build up of salts.

Dormancy Period

Flytraps require a dormancy period, in autumn growth almost stops and leaves no longer develop, the plant will rest until it can see a rapid increase in daylight hour. During this time watering may be reduced but should not dry out. Winter temperatures of 10 degrees or lower are required for dormancy to occur. The plants are best left outside during winter. Artificial lighting or heating should be avoided. Leaves will die off over the winter period. The brown leaves may be removed so they do not rot. Do not prune the live portions of the leaves as the plant will utilize the nutrients from these during the dormancy period.

Repotting

Flytraps cannot be grown in soils or regular potting mixes, the most popular media is a mixture of peat moss (60%) and propagating (coarse) sand (40%), sphagnum moss is also used by some growers. The media must not contain material that will decompose. Plants may be repotted from July to December. The best period is before growth starts otherwise some damage will occur.

Flytraps do not have bulbs or rhizomes, they produce a new leaf with a thick swollen base, from this a new leaf forms and this continues in a straight line, the older leaves eventually die and the stem disappears, new plants are often formed on this older growth. Eventually a plant will reach the side of the pot or grow around it.

Flytraps obtain their own fertilizers by catching insects, a supplementary liquid Fertilizer will also help from September to March but should not be used at more than 10% of recommended rate.

Pests & Diseases

Flytraps suffer from very few diseases and no insect pests but may rot if grown under adverse conditions.


Rare colourform


Typical Flytrap in Spring

Good Growing!

Collectors Corner, Gardenworld
810 Springvale Rd, Braeside
Ph: 9798 5845 Fax: 9706 3339.
Www.collectorscorner.com.au


Upright Variety