Venus Flytrap [1]

Venus Flytrap

by Craig M. Stinson, 2006

See also: State Symbol: Carnivorous Plant (Venus Flytrap) [2]

A cluster of Venus flytraps (with spiked “traps”) and pitcher plants growing in southeastern North Carolina. Photograph by Johnny Randall.

The Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*), one of the few carnivorous plants [3] on earth, grows naturally along a small section of the North Carolina and South Carolina coastline within a 75-mile radius of Wilmington [4]. It prospers only in humid, boggy areas such as the Carolina Bays [5]. The traps, which grow in a rosette, are formed by pairs of modified leaves that resemble clam shells and have spikes along their edges; the inner surfaces of the leaves are equipped with reddish glands that attract insects and arachnids. When an insect touches this surface twice in rapid succession, tiny hairs act as a trigger to close the trap rapidly. Digestion requires seven to ten days depending upon the size of the insect. In 1750 North Carolina's royal governor, Arthur Dobbs [6], called attention to this unusual plant, described as a "carnivorous vegetable [7]" by botanist William Bartram [8] in 1794. Charles Darwin described it in *Insectivorous Plants* [9] (1875) as "the most wonderful plant in the world [10]."

In 1934 the Venus flytrap was made the official flower of the Garden Clubs of North Carolina [11], and after a number of years it grew in popularity. Poachers began to dig the plant for sale; the Venus flytrap was officially protected by legislation [12] in 1951.

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Additional Resources:

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A cluster of Venus flytraps (with spiked “traps”) and pitcher plants growing in southeastern North Carolina. Photograph by Johnny Randall.

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From:
Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.[21]

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