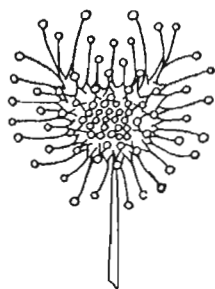


Figure 1: *N. sanguinea* x *N. tobaica* cv. 'Shivas Regal'



Figure 2: *N. gracilis* cv. 'Nighttime Regal'

The Savage Garden



Windowsill Growing

PETER D'AMATO
California Carnivores
7020 Trenton-Healdsburg Road
Forestville, CA 95436
(707) 838-1630

Keywords: cultivation:general

A Nepenthes in your living room? Sundews over your kitchen sink?
Butterworts in your bath?

Twenty years ago many carnivorous plant enthusiasts would have raised eyebrows over such possibilities, assuming that to grow a CP indoors, terraria would be a requirement. Not necessarily so. From London to New York to San Francisco to Melbourne, many carnivores are finding happy homes in people's houses and offices, requiring minimal care while offering maximal pleasure.

This does not mean you can grow a Venus' flytrap wherever you grow a parlor palm. Most houseplants are cultivated for their low light tolerance, and

in fact may dislike or be burned by direct sun. CPs are sun lovers, and this is perhaps the most important fact to consider when choosing carnivores to grow indoors. I use the term windowsill to stress this point. Most carnivorous plants, to be successful indoors, usually need to be as close to a window as possible. A windowsill or tabletop next to the glass is the brightest place in a room, which is what CPs typically require.

Furthermore since most carnivores are sun-lovers, direct sunshine streaming through the window for at least part of the day is also a necessity, although there are a few exceptions. Direct sun should hit most CPs a minimum of two to five hours during the growing season. Keep in mind that the sun moves about in the sky from season to season. Thus there are few windows that receive the same amount of sun most of the year. Many people in the northern hemisphere assume south-facing windows are the sunniest, but this may only be true in the winter when the sun is low in the sky. When the sun moves directly overhead, a window with southern exposure may receive no direct sun at all especially if your house has a roof overhang.

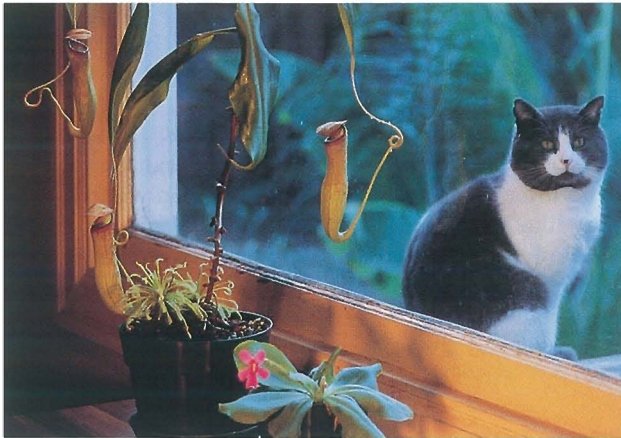


Figure 1: "*N. Khasiana*, *D. capensis* 'alba', and *P. moranensis* at the home of the author. Photo by Sharon Bergeron."

Most growers have found that east or southeast windows which receive cooler morning sun are probably the best indoor location for CPs. West and southwest facing windows are also quite good, but if the afternoon sun is too hot in your house, screening or sheer curtains may be needed to make the sunlight less harsh and to

keep the plants from burning.

There are several things to consider when growing carnivorous plants indoors. If you wish to grow temperate plants, such as the Venus' flytrap or American pitcher plant, you must heed their dormancy requirements. The shortening of the daylight period triggers the plant's rest period. Dormancy also requires cooler temperatures. It may not require temperatures as cold as the plant may experience in its native habitat, but dormant plants should be protected from hot sun and warm temperatures. It is therefore wise to move such dormant plants outdoors, if your climate can sustain them, or perhaps to the coolest north-facing windowsill. Choose a room that is not overly heated, especially at night. Basement and garage windowsills can fill this requirement, as can enclosed porches that get cold in the wintertime.

Some folks who have no such environment to place dormant plants may

instead remove the plant from its soil and store the rhizome in a resealable plastic bag after trimming whatever leaves may be remaining on the plant late in the season. A few strands of damp, long fiber *Sphagnum* moss or a handful of moist peat moss can be added to the bag, and then refrigerated over winter. Come late winter, the rhizome is repeated and the plant returned to the windowsill.

Minimum dormancy for temperate plants should be around three months. In the U.S., remember that plants should enter a rest period some time between Halloween and Thanksgiving (November) and can be brought out of dormancy as early as Valentine's Day in the middle of February, but no later than Easter. By the approach of spring in March, the well-rested plants will begin the season's growth.

Of course, many subtropical and warm-temperate CPs will continue to grow through winter and will not require a cold rest period, although they may slow their growth. These plants, like *Cephalotus* or Cape sundews or the Mexican butterworts, will be happy year-round on the windowsill. You may want to grow such plants on a sunny south-facing window in winter, and if the sun disappears there by spring, move the plants to an east or west window for summer.

Alternatively, you may grow plants outdoors in the summer and then move them to a sunny windowsill for winter, to protect them from unsuitably cold weather. You might live in a city like Boston and grow Mexican butterworts or Cape sundews outdoors for the summer, then move them to a windowsill before the first frosts. Remember, if you do this with a Venus' flytrap or yellow trumpet plant (*Sarracenia flava*) because your winters are too cold to leave them outdoors, be sure you respect their rest periods and keep them in a cool and sunless window.

Success with windowsill growing may depend on where and how you live. Humidity is certainly important for carnivorous plants indoors, but not as important as good light. If you live near a coastline, indoor humidity is often suitable for CPs. If you live in a desert community, air-conditioning or evaporative coolers will often help windowsill plants. In winter, heating your house may lower humidity drastically, especially with energy sources such as wood stoves. You may want to keep a kettle on your wood stove to replenish water vapor.

Misting indoor CPs can be quite beneficial, and I recommend you keep a spray-bottle of purified water near your plants if your house is on the dry side. Wetting the foliage in the morning and evening would be appropriate if your humidity is low.

Here are some suggested plants for the windowsill, if conditions are appropriate. You can grow the Venus' flytrap, most Mexican butterworts and *Sarracenia* species and hybrids (although they will require much direct sun). Most terrestrial and epiphytic bladderworts that are subtropical to tropical in origin (such as *U. livida*, *sandersonii*, *reniformis* and *humboldtii*) and aquatics like *U. gibba* will thrive. Other suitable plants are *Cephalotus*, *Byblis liniflora*,

sundews (such as rosetted subtropicals, Cape sundews, *D. regia*, and *D. binata*). *Darlingtonia* will do well if your house is cool. Try highland *Nepenthes* such as *N. khasiana*, × 'Rokko', *alata* and *ventricosa*, and their hybrids. Some lowland hybrids can also do surprisingly well, like the beautiful *N. × dyeriana*, which has some highland ancestry.

International Carnivorous Plant Conference May 16-20, 1997

hosted by

Atlanta Botanical Garden and the International Carnivorous Plant Society
Held at The Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Proposed Agenda

Thursday, 15 May, 1997, 6.30pm

Welcome buffet & late registration

Friday, 16 May, 1997, 8.00am-6.30pm

Six Speakers from around the world including Prof. K. Kondo on 'Habitat management and in & ex situ conservation of CPs in Japan' and Dr. Martin Cheek, RBG, Kew, UK on 'Diversity within the genus *Utricularia*'. Followed by poster session, plant sale (only artificially propagated plants) and tour of ABG CP collection

Saturday, 17 May, 1997, 8.00am-5.00pm

Six Speakers throughout the day followed by ABG CP collection tour

Sunday, 18 May, 1997, 8.30am-3.45pm

Six Speakers throughout the day

Monday, 19 May - Tuesday, 20 May, 1997

Two day field trip to visit CPs in Georgia and surrounding states

Registration

Registration will cover welcome buffet, continental breakfast, breaks and box lunch and drink throughout the conference

*Registration **\$65.00**

*Field Trip (limited to 50 places) **\$120.00**(inclusive of accommodation, travel and food)

The conference organizers are not responsible for securing plant import/export permits and all delegates are responsible for travel, medical, and car rental insurance.

Please address inquiries to:

International Carnivorous Plant Conference
c/o Steve Baker
5029 West Piedmont Circle
Conover, NC 28613, USA
Day: 704-322-2050 9am - 5pm
Evening: 704-256-7035 7pm - 10pm