

## Venus Flytrap <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Venus Flytrap

by Craig M. Stinson, 2006

See also: [State Symbol: Carnivorous Plant \(Venus Flytrap\)](#) <sup>[2]</sup>



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](#) <sup>[3]</sup> on earth, grows naturally along a small section of the North Carolina and South Carolina coastline within a 75-mile radius of [Wilmington](#) <sup>[4]</sup>. It prospers only in humid, boggy areas such as the [Carolina Bays](#) <sup>[5]</sup>. 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](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, called attention to this unusual plant, described as a "[carnivorous vegetable](#) <sup>[7]</sup>" by botanist [William Bartram](#) <sup>[8]</sup> in 1794. Charles Darwin described it in *Insectivorous Plants* <sup>[9]</sup> (1875) as "[the most wonderful plant in the world](#)" <sup>[10]</sup>.

In 1934 the Venus flytrap was made the official flower of the [Garden Clubs of North Carolina](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, 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](#) <sup>[12]</sup> in 1951.

### References:

William C. Coker, "Distribution of Venus's Fly Trap," *Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society Journal* 43 (July 1928).

W. Charles Nelson, *Aphrodite's Mousetrap* (1990).

Patricia R. Roberts, "Response of Venus Fly Trap," *Ecological Monographs* 28 (April 1958).

### Additional Resources:

An Act to Adopt the Venus Flytrap as the Official Carnivorous Plant of the State of North Carolina. North Carolina General Statutes § 145-22. (passed June 7, 2005). <https://www.ncleg.net/sessions/2005/bills/senate/pdf/s116v4.pdf> <sup>[13]</sup> (accessed June 28, 2012).

Meeker-O'Connell, Ann. "How Venus Flytraps Work" HowStuffWorks.com <http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/life/botany/venus-flytrap.htm> <sup>[14]</sup> (accessed June 28, 2012).

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"Venus Flytrap." The Nature Conservancy. <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/northcarolina/explore/venus-flytrap-brochure.pdf> <sup>[16]</sup> (accessed June 28, 2012).

Baker, Mike/Associated Press. "Venus flytraps are trapped in a shrinking natural habitat" *USA TODAY* October 5, 2008.

[http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/environment/2008-10-05-venus-flytraps\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/environment/2008-10-05-venus-flytraps_N.htm) <sup>[17]</sup> (accessed June 28, 2012).

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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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[11] <http://www.gardenclubofnc.org/>

[12] <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/u?p249901coll22,376999>

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