

Venus Flytrap ^[1]

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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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