



Grow Happy and Healthy Venus Flytraps

Instructions & Tips from the Flytrap Ranch

<http://www.FlytrapRanch.com/>

Venus Flytraps are amazing plants which are easy to grow if you satisfy their few simple requirements. They don't need much but they must have what they need, in order to thrive under your care. To help keep your plants happy and healthy, please read and follow the tips below, then visit **FlytrapCare.com** where there is a helpful community of Venus Flytrap growers who can answer any questions you may have. Best wishes, —Steve (steve@flytrapranch.com)

Unpacking and Planting your Venus Flytraps

- ✓ **When you first receive your Venus Flytraps**, carefully unwrap any packing material and soak the whole plant (leaves, roots and all) in only pure distilled water, collected rain water or reverse osmosis water (**don't use tap water!** it can easily damage the sensitive roots of Venus Flytraps) for 15 minutes to half an hour. If you don't yet have some distilled, reverse osmosis or rain water, just leave the plant(s) in the bag in a place *away from direct sunlight* for a while until you are able to obtain pure water, but open the bag momentarily for a fresh air change before closing the bag again.
- ✓ **Planting media** — Until you learn what alternative planting media will also work, plant them in a mixture of 50% pure sphagnum peat moss and 50% silica sand or perlite. If you can't obtain sand that is composed of almost pure silica (such as sandblasting or pool filter sand and **not** river nor beach nor desert nor sandbox “play” sand), then use perlite instead of sand. **Warning:** *do not use Miracle-Gro brand sphagnum peat moss nor perlite; they are “enriched” (adulterated) with plant food that may kill Venus Flytraps.*
- ✓ **Planting container** — *Do not* plant Venus Flytraps in terrariums or other clear containers or containers that have sides that extend several inches or more above the surface of the potting medium “soil,” unless you plan to grow them completely out of direct sunlight with only fluorescent or other “grow lights”; direct sunlight entering through the clear sides of such containers can quickly heat both the soil and the air around the plant to such a degree that plants’ roots or leaves can easily be damaged or killed. Use glazed ceramic, plastic or insulating polyurethane foam planting containers that have a drainage hole and are at least 4 inches deep, and preferably 6-8 inches deep. You can plant several Venus Flytraps together in a larger container. Venus Flytraps like lots of depth for their roots and will grow larger and healthier with this extra room. Plant them so that the “bulb” (the whitish, swollen part just above the roots) is buried into the planting medium while the green part of the leaves is above the surface.

Requirements for Venus Flytraps

- ✓ **Water** — Use only rainwater, distilled water or reverse osmosis water. Venus Flytraps require very pure water. Your tap water is likely to contain too much of dissolved solids—minerals and salts—that may kill a Venus Flytrap, possibly within weeks. Always keep your Venus Flytraps moist, but never soggy for long, and never dry. One way to accomplish this is to water thoroughly from the top or by allowing water to soak into the medium from the bottom through the drainage hole, and then allow the planting medium to dry until it is just moist before watering again. Although some people recommend it, I personally don't like to place Venus Flytrap containers in a tray of water for hours or days unless it's absolutely necessary to prevent them from drying out while unattended (such as when you are taking a vacation or trip for a few days). When Venus Flytraps are very wet, they should also be warm and in the sun. Wet and cold is unhealthy (just like it is for people) and can cause fungal infections, rot and even death.
- ✓ **Soil** — Venus Flytraps must have a particular kind of soil. They will very likely die in “potting soil” or soil from your garden or yard. Their soil must be like the soil in their natural habitat: acidic and with almost no nutrients, moisture retentive but well drained. Until you learn what various types of ingredients

(over please)

you can have in their soil (from research on the Internet or from books, for example), it is best to use pure shagnum peat moss (no other kind of “moss”) mixed with a more or less equal amount of silica sand (not beach or river or “play” sand) and/or perlite.

- ✓ **Sun** — Venus Flytraps like plenty of sun. However, if the sides of a planter become very hot in full sun, try to cool the planter so that the roots don't overheat or burn. One way to do this without depriving the Venus Flytrap of the sun it wants and needs, is to place the planting container inside another larger container, with perlite filling the space between the two to insulate the inside container. Another way is to plant the Venus Flytrap in a styrofoam container (like a 16 or 20 ounce insulated beverage cup) or in a polyurethane foam planter (I sell some of these at FlytrapRanch.com, or you may be able to find them at a local home and garden store).
- ✓ **Fertilizer?** *No—never.* Although experienced growers can occasionally fertilize Venus Flytraps lightly using special techniques such as foliar feeding, Venus Flytraps will probably die when fertilized by beginner growers, for the same reason that they usually die from tap water: too many minerals and chemicals. These burn the plants' roots and kill them. Venus Flytraps get all the nutrition they need from the sun (through photosynthesis like any plant) and from the insects they catch. If they are healthy and if you put them outside sometimes to “hunt,” they will catch insects on their own. You can also feed them captured flies or other insects (*but not meat!*). It helps to place a captured fly in a glass bottle that is very cold for a few minutes to make the fly lethargic. Use tweezers to hold the drowsy fly by a wing, then place the fly in a trap and move it a little to stimulate the trigger hairs near the middle of the trap, which should cause a healthy trap to close. Don't close the traps over and over again, because each trap must grow a very particular way to be able to close, and can only snap shut a few times (perhaps half a dozen) before it won't respond anymore.
- ✓ **Dormancy** — Venus Flytraps must have a rest period of a few months every year. When the days become shorter and cooler in the Fall, the plants begin to slow down, not grow as much, and the traps begin to be sluggish. During dormancy Venus Flytraps should be kept cool. Although the plants can survive light frosts and brief freezing, it is better to keep them above freezing: 40 to about 55 degrees at night is sufficiently cool, and they can be warmer at times during the day, but should be cool to cold most of the time. They should not be watered nearly as often because they don't need nor use as much water during their dormancy. Carefully cut off any traps that turn black. This is natural. Venus Flytrap leaves, like all plants' leaves, eventually die and are replaced by fresh leaves in time. During dormancy a healthy Venus Flytrap can look almost dead on top, but assuming it has not dried out completely nor rotted from too much water, it is healthy and will begin to grow vigorously again sometime in the Spring. At that time it will appreciate being placed in warmer conditions and watered more frequently again.

For more information and to ask questions about Venus Flytraps, **and to learn how to germinate seeds**, please visit FlytrapCare.com and join the website's forum. A **seed growing guide** is also available at FlytrapRanch.com —Steve, Flytrap Ranch, New Mexico US.

Happy Growing

