FEED ME!

Description

Plants never quite held an interest to me. I understood their vital roles in the ecosystem, I admired their beauty and their survival in the harshest of climates, and I spent a long time learning how they grow, evolve and reproduce.

But, they never were able to keep my interest compared to animals, which is why I studied zoology and not botany.

However, there are a few species of plants that I do like, and here they are:

Sundew

From the family *Droseraceae*, these plants look and act in an interesting way. At first glance, they appear to have some dew on the ends of their long leaves. But, like most plants, looks can be deceiving â€“ they are true killers.

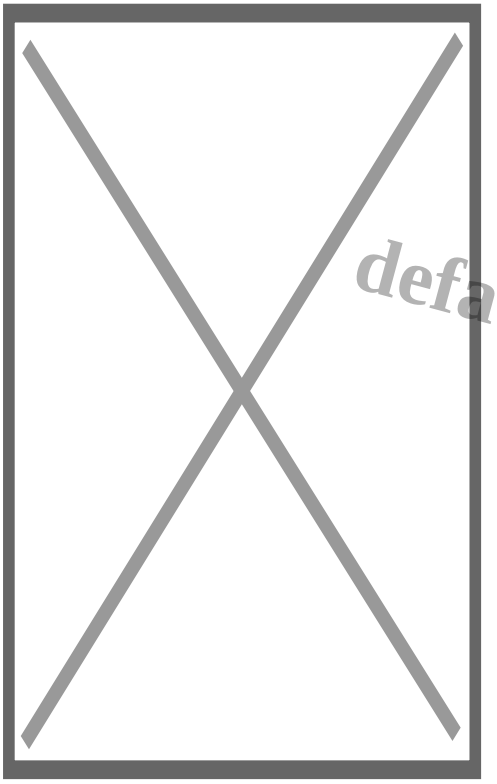
The droplets of dew are not dew at all, but a sticky substance known as **mucilage** that will trap any unlucky insect that happens to be attracted to the glistening globs.

Once the insect touches down to sample the fake dew, the true marvel of the Sundew is revealed. The plant then contorts its tentacles to the centre of the leaf, and traps the insect with a barrage of sticky globs of mucilage.

Once the insect is cornered, there is no escape.

It is survival of the fittest at its best.

Pitcher Plant



In researching the pitcher plant for this blog, I came upon something very interesting, but I will get to that after the description.

Examining the pitcher plant (most of which fall within the Family *Sarraceniaceae)*, nothing too extraordinary leaps out, other than their long tube. They seem perfectly innocent upon first glance. But, these plants are a marvel of evolution.

The pitchers live in nutrient deficient areas, like most other carnivorous plants, and have to supplement with the only other source available â€“ live prey. What makes the pitcher plants so unique is the way they go about it, which is distinctly less active than the Sundew.

The leaf attracts insects with the promise of nectar, which is located on the underside of the leaf, right above the mouth of the tube. If the insect strays too far to reach the sweet nectar, it falls into the pit below and drowns in water. It is then dissolved and used as food for the plant.

No fuss, no muss.

And what was the surprise I discovered? The species known as the purple pitcher plant, *Sarracenia purpurea*, is of great importance to one part of Canada.

According to the website, newfoundlandlabrador.com, the pitcher plant is of great importance.

â€œFor many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the pitcher plant represents a flexibility and distinctiveness that we associate with. In 1954, the Newfoundland Cabinet designated this unusual and interesting plant as the official flower of the province.â€•

Venus Fly Trap

No list of carnivorous plants could be complete without this magnificent example. It is likely the most famous killer plant, and it cannot be denied that it is one of the most impressive example of unique adaptations and predatory strategies.

The Venus Fly Trap (*Dionaea muscipula*), like the Sundew and Pitcher plants, primarily digests insects and arachnids.

The trap is set up like all the others, with a lure of sweet nectar. But, the fly trap possesses many minuscule hairs strewn along it. If an animal contacts more than one within a few seconds, it triggers an action potential that causes the trap to be sprung.

The closure of the plant is quick, and creates a prison from which escape is not likely, and then the prey is slowly digested.

Here is a video showing Pitcher plants and Venus fly traps in action, featuring none other than the amazing David Attenborough:

And, for those who are interested, here is a website where you can BUY Sundews, Pitcher plants and even Venus fly traps!

http://www.flytrapcare.com/store/

By the way, the title of the blog is an homage to the movie â€œLittle Shop of Horrors,â€• which features a very large killer plant that needs human blood to grow.

David
The definitive host

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