

# Venus Flytrap

## Saving Our Carnivorous Legacy

You can help protect Venus flytraps:

- Buy from reputable dealers who don't sell poached stock
- Help The Nature Conservancy protect and restore Venus flytrap habitat by going to [nature.org/northcarolina](http://nature.org/northcarolina) or calling 919.794.4380.

Venus flytrap PHOTO © JODIE LAPPOINT



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**The Nature Conservancy**

(919) 403-8558

[nature.org/northcarolina](http://nature.org/northcarolina)



Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/TNCNC](https://www.facebook.com/TNCNC)

Venus flytrap  
(*Dionaea muscipula*)  
PHOTO © SKIP PUDNEY

“One of the Most Wonderful  
Plants in the World”

-CHARLES DARWIN



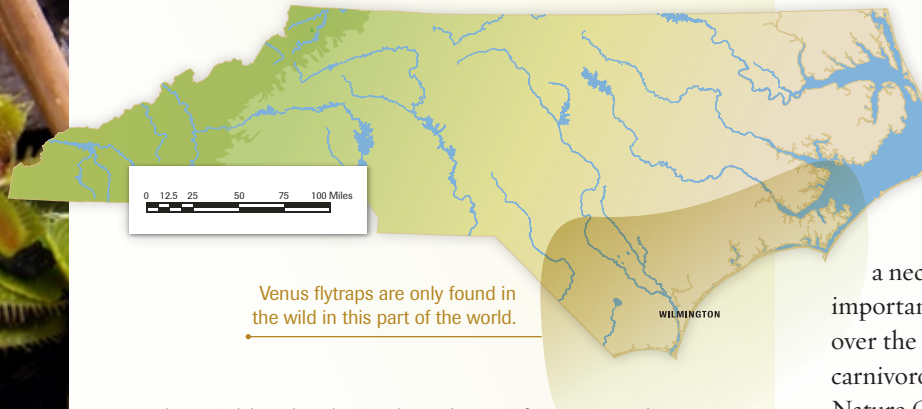
Venus flytrap PHOTO © MARK DANIELS/TNC

## Southeastern North Carolina's Rare and Internationally Famous Resident

Back in 1760, North Carolina Colonial Governor Arthur Dobbs found an unusual plant; it was actually trapping and eating insects. Dobbs described his find in his diary: "The greatest wonder of the vegetable kingdom is a very curious unknown species. Upon touching the leaves, they instantly close like a spring trap. It bears a white flower. To this surprising plant, I have given the name Fly Trap." A few years later, someone sent a flytrap to Charles Darwin who called it "one of the most wonderful plants in the world."

The plant came to be known as a Venus flytrap. Its Latin name is *Dionaea muscipula*, which means: *Dionaea* is the goddess of love. *Muscipula* means mousetrap.

The Venus flytrap is one of the most well known plants



Venus flytraps are only found in the wild in this part of the world.

in the world. It has been the subject of movies and musicals; Audrey the carnivorous plant in "Little Shop of Horrors" is part flytrap.

There is only one species of Venus flytrap and it only occurs in the wild in a very small corner of the world.

The Nature Conservancy is working to preserve this precious land. One of our oldest and largest preserves, the Green Swamp in Brunswick County is prime habitat. We have also protected Venus flytrap territory in Onslow, Pender and New Hanover counties.

In 2005, the North Carolina Legislature underscored the Venus flytrap's position in our natural heritage – naming it the state's official carnivorous plant.

### Insects for Dinner

Plants need nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. But, Venus flytraps live in bogs with really poor soil that doesn't contain many nutrients. Insects do. Eating those insects provides flytraps and other carnivorous plants that are found in the same neighborhoods with essential nutrients.

### Shrinking Habitat

Flytraps never had a huge natural habitat, since they are only found in the wild in southeastern North Carolina

and northeastern South Carolina. Coastal development has destroyed much of that meager habitat. Large swathes of land, such as the Green Swamp, have been affected by fire suppression. For most of the last century, all fire was viewed as bad. But, fire is a necessary and natural process that is particularly important for Venus flytraps. Without fire, shrubs take over the forest, shading out the flytraps and other carnivorous plants that thrive on the forest floor. The Nature Conservancy is working to restore that habitat with controlled or prescribed burning – setting fires that mimic nature.

### Poachers on the Prowl

The Venus flytrap's fame has also been its undoing. Every year poachers steal flytraps. Although poachers can be prosecuted, that rarely happens. It is hard to catch them, and sometimes people don't realize just how bad this crime is. But, they should. Venus flytraps are arguably North Carolina's most famous natural legacy. Losing these wonderful plants is a tragedy. You can help stop this illegal behavior by buying flytraps from reputable sources, which have cultivated them in greenhouses. If you see someone selling flytraps at a flea market, on the roadside or over the Internet, there is a good chance that they are stolen.

### Seeing Flytraps Firsthand

The Conservancy's Green Swamp and Boiling Spring Lakes preserves in Brunswick County are open to the public. The Conservancy also hosts occasional guided hikes for carnivorous plant lovers; details are available at [nature.org/northcarolina](http://nature.org/northcarolina). Carolina Beach State Park in New Hanover County boasts a flytrap trail, which is described at [ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov).