



Dionaea muscipula



Dionaea muscipula (Venus Flytrap), the most well-known of the carnivorous plants, consists of a rosette of leaves arising from a corm (a fleshy bulb-like structure). Each leaf consists of a petiole terminating in a lobed trap with sensitive hairs that detect the presence of an insect and triggers the leaf to snap shut.

The leaves die after the traps have closed 4 to 6 times and are continuously replaced by new ones. New corms may also form in spring.

Distribution and habitat

Dionaea muscipula is native to the nutrient-poor coastal bogs of North and South Carolina in the United States.

Light

Grow *Dionaea* outdoors in direct sunlight. If grown indoors, ensure that plants receive at least 4 hours direct sunlight per day. Long thin leaves topped with small traps indicate insufficient light.

Temperature

Dionaea can withstand high summer temperatures as long as they have sufficiently high humidity. They are tolerant of mild frost in winter.

Water

During the growing season pots should be placed in trays of water about 25mm. Over the cooler months when the plants are dormant the plants must still be kept moist but not wet; excessive wetness during this period can lead to root rot. Do not allow pots to dry out at any time.

Rain water is preferable, but tap water may be used if not excessively hard.

If you use the tray watering method almost exclusively, ensure that excess dissolved salts are flushed out every few weeks by watering the plants from above until the tray overflows by at least twice its capacity.

Fertilizer

Dionaea do not need fertilizing as they catch their own food. If you must feed them, use live insects only.

Growing media

Option 1: Live sphagnum moss

Option 2: Sphagnum moss peat / sand / perlite mix. Sand must be washed thoroughly to remove salts.

Dormancy

Winter dormancy is essential to *Dionaea*. Winter leaves have significantly shorter petioles. Dead leaves should be removed to avoid fungal disease. New leaves will emerge in spring.

Propagation

1. Seed
2. Clump division
3. Scape and leaf cuttings.

Common pests and diseases

1. Excessive handling of traps. The closing and reopening of traps is costly to *Dionaea* in terms of resources, which are replenished when it digests its prey. **Excessive handling will eventually cause the plant to starve to death.**

2. Remove the flower scape from the plant as soon as it appears as it also weakens the plant, possibly leading to its death. The flowers are insignificant and white in colour.

3. Aphids are easily controlled with Pyrethrum insecticide. Use only hand sprayers and avoid aerosol sprays.

When to repot

1. When a large clump of plants has to be split.
2. When the potting medium has deteriorated (approximately every two years).

Credits:

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