



What's on next?

Monday 11th February  
Chris Bell  
"Global Warming"

## Monday 14th January



## Bernard Steward - Carnivorous Plants

Our first Garden Club meeting of 2019 was a talk given by Bernard Steward on Carnivorous Plants.

Carnivorous plants are plants that derive some or most of their nutrients from trapping and consuming small animals and insects. These plants have adapted to grow in places where the soil is thin or poor in nutrients.

Bernard talked about three main types of carnivorous plant: sarracenias, droseras and pinguiculas

**Sarracinias** are unusual in that they have 'pitchers'; a pitcher is a rolled leaf that contains a pool of digestive enzymes or bacteria. It looks like a long tube and the enzymes inside it will quickly kill any insect such as a fly or bluebottle that enters it. Insects are attracted by the scent at the top of the pitcher. Sarracenias have flowers that are a little bit taller than the pitchers. Sarracenias vary in size and the taller plants, which grow up to 3 - 4 feet, tend to have fewer pitchers.

**Droseras** are very hardy plants that have snap traps using rapid leaf movements. They will go black on top over winter as the top dies off. The Venus Fly Trap is a drosera and although it produces flowers, Bernard recommends nipping out the flowers so the plant puts its energy into producing the traps. Many droseras have bright flowers and self seed easily.

**Pinguiculas** have very sticky leaves that act like a flypaper. They are particularly good for catching white fly and black fly.

During the colder months, carnivorous plants are dormant and need to be kept moist (but not wet) and cold. If not, detritus can get into the roots and harm the plant. It is a good time to divide plants and Bernard demonstrated how to divide and repot a sarracenia and a Venus Fly Trap. He emphasised the need to pot all carnivorous plants in a peat mixture comprising 6 parts peat to 1 part silver sand and 1 part perlite. Silver sand is used as it is lime free which is important as lime acts as a poison on any carnivorous plant and will burn the roots. Sarracenias have a tendency to push outwards so need to be planted in the middle of a pot.

In the summer, pots should be left to stand in a dish of rainwater so that they don't dry out.

There are thousands of carnivorous plants and many are still being found in places like the Amazon Rainforest. There is a particularly huge range of them in Australia, some of which lie buried up to a metre deep under sand until rainfall makes them grow.

Bernard was thanked for a most informative and interesting talk