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Carnivorous Plants and Black Bears

By Jacob Farin

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Carnivorous plants native to the United States are accustomed to cold temperatures, frost and snow. That is what really makes these plants very unique. They may look tropical, but really they are as hardy as a black bear in the Rockies.

But, like the black bear, there is something that frost-tolerant plants do not like - dry freezing Arctic wind. This type of wind will pull moisture right out of your plant and cause your plant to wither away.

There are couple ways to protect your plants from the wind, while making sure they stay in hibernation.

Wind protection is only necessary if you live in zones 5 or below and temperatures routinely go below 20°F for more than a week at a time.

Like the black bear, you can place your plants in a cave. If you do not have a cave in your backyard, place your plants in an unheated garage, tool shed or cold frame, which is essentially an unheated greenhouse.

Because the plants are dormant and has stopped growing for the winter, light is not much of an issue. Just make sure the soil is always moist. You can maintain its moisture by keeping the plant in no more than 1/4-inch of water.

Before placing your plants in your cave, so to speak, follow these important steps:

1. Cut off all dead leaves. With any of the Sweet Pitchers (*Sarracenia rubra*), trim all the leaves right down to the rhizome. This will help reduce moisture loss. There is no need to do this other species.
2. Give the plant a good spraying with a sulfur-based fungicide. (We use Safer brand.) Follow the instructions as directed by the manufacturer.
3. Place your plant in an unheated shelter, and keep the soil moist at all times.

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This is perhaps the simplest method of protecting your plant from the dry freezing Arctic wind. Just remember that it is not frost that destroys outdoor container plants. It is dry freezing wind.

In April, it will be safe to bring your plants out of dormancy, which happens to be about the same time black bears come back out and begin foraging.

If you live in zones 6 and above, wind protection is necessary when there is a brief cold snap, bringing the temperature down below 20°F. In this case, wind protection is usually temporary and covering your plants with a tarp or sheets of plastic will do the trick.

Jacob Farin is co-owner of Sarracenia Northwest, a nursery specializing in the cultivation of carnivorous plants. More information about the cultivation of carnivorous plants can be found at <http://www.cobraplant.com>.

Pairing Orchids with Other Flowers

By Orchid Geeks

Because there are so many varieties of orchids, you'll also find that there are lots of unique pairings of orchids with other plants. One of the most striking ways to grow and display your orchids, in fact, is in a naturalistic setting in a terrarium where their unconventional beauty is complemented by other plants that are native to the same habitats. By including gravel, charcoal or bark chips in the growth medium of your terrarium, you can happily grow a wide variety of orchids that will suit and complement other plants chosen for your terrarium.

Orchids are quite happy sharing their environment with other flowers and plants. Generally, orchids have the same temperature, humidity and light requirements as most popular houseplants, so they don't need a specialized environment set apart from your other houseplants. Because orchids are epiphytic (taking their nutrition from the moisture in the air), you'll find that they work very well in dish gardens when provided with a layer of moist sphagnum moss or loose bark in which to root. orchid care

One of the most common pairings for a terrarium are carnivorous plants and orchids. The exotic foliage and showy blooms of the two kinds of plants not only look spectacular together - the two plants also 'help' each other. While the relationship isn't quite symbiotic, the blooms of the orchid help attract the insects on which a Venus fly trap or other carnivorous plant feeds. It's a popular pairing that is often promoted by the sellers of exotic plants.

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