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Senator William Purcell of Laurinburg has introduced Senate Bill 116 that, if passed, will designate the Venus Flytrap as the official carnivorous plant of North Carolina.

The Venus Flytrap is a unique plant that is native to southeastern North Carolina and northeastern South Carolina. The species' worldwide distribution lies within a triangular shaped area with points in New Bern and Fayetteville, N.C. and Georgetown, S.C. Although it has been planted in other places it occurs naturally nowhere else and is a unique part of North Carolina's natural heritage. Due to this limited range, specific habitat requirements and the threat of being collected to extinction, the Venus Flytrap is protected by the North Carolina Plant Protection and Conservation Act.

While the Venus Flytrap is the most widely known of the carnivorous plants native to North Carolina, there are actually 30 species of carnivorous plants occurring naturally in our State according to Dale Suiter, biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Raleigh, N.C. "Our carnivorous plants occur in a variety of wetland habitats from mountain bogs to sandhill seeps to wet longleaf pine savannahs," said Suiter. "Many of the habitats on which these species rely are threatened with development and pollution," he said. Two species of pitcher plant, the green pitcher plant and the mountain sweet pitcher plant, are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as endangered and are protected by the Endangered Species Act.

With more than 4,000 species of native plants, North Carolina is one of the most botanically diverse States in the country. "We have a responsibility to protect our rich natural heritage for its intrinsic value and for the enjoyment of future generations," said Suiter. "I was happy to see the Senate Bill designating the Venus Flytrap as the official carnivorous plant," he added. "I hope because of the Senator's action more people will become interested in North Carolina's rich plant diversity and help protect it."

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Plant Description: Latin Name (*Dionaea muscipula)* - The tips of Venus Flytrap leaves resemble miniature bear traps. Each half of the trap contains tiny trigger hairs. When an insect touches these trigger hairs, the leaf snaps shut, trapping the insect with interlocking hairs. *For additional photographs visit: http://nc-es.fws.gov/fwsphotos/*

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Plant Protection: Various federal and state agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North Carolina Plant Conservation Program and the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program are working with local land trusts and others to protect populations of the Venus Flytrap and other rare species native to North Carolina. All native plants are protected from collection without written permission of the landowner and a permit from the North Carolina Plant Conservation Program.

Other carnivorous plants: In addition to the Venus Flytrap, there are six species of pitcher plants *(Sarracenia)*, five sundews *(Drosera)*, three butterworts *(Pinguicula)* and 15 bladderworts *(Utricularia)*. These carnivorous species contain modified leaves that allow them to attract, trap and kill insects. They secrete digestive enzymes that allow them to obtain nourishment from their prey.

- Pitcher plants are made up of many long, slender tube shaped leaves. These modified leaves collect water. Downward pointing hairs prevent insects from escaping once they have entered the tube shaped leaf. The plant secretes digestive enzymes into the water filled leaf that allow it to gain nourishment from the dead insects.
- Sundews get their name from the sticky droplets at the tip of leaf hairs. These droplets attract and trap insects. Five different species are found from North Carolina's high elevation mountain bogs to our Coastal Plain savannahs.
- Butterworts are also found in wet savannahs of the Coastal Plain. The surface of their leaves is covered by a sticky substance which traps small insects that walk across the leaf surface.
- Bladderworts are a group of floating carnivorous plants with modified, bladder shaped leaves beneath the surface of the water. These "bladders" have a trap door configuration with small trigger hairs surrounding the door. When tiny animals come near the trigger hairs, the trap door snaps open and sucks the animal inside the bladder. Digestive juices help the plant gain nourishment from the animal. Bladderworts are found in rivers, ponds, and roadside ditches in eastern North Carolina.

For more information about North Carolina's native flora and to view plants contact:
The North Carolina Plant Conservation Program -Rob Evans, 919-733-3610
The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program - Misty Franklin, 919-715-8700
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - In Raleigh, Dale Suiter, 919-856-4520 or Carolyn Wells, 828-258-3939 in Asheville
The North Carolina Botanical Garden -Johnny Randall, 919-962-0522
The N.C. Native Plant Society - www.ncwildflower.org; offers field trips to natural areas throughout North Carolina.
Web resources: http://www.carnivorousplants.org/, http://www.sarracenia.com/cp.html, http://www.rdrop.com/users/mvz/plants.htm