

The Bizarre World of **Carnivorous Plants**

by Emere Nieves

In the understory of certain forests the conditions are damp. The soil that holds the roots is typically depleted of minerals and nutrients (especially nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and essential micronutrients for most plants) washed away by year-round rainfall, however, a group of plants have adapted to these conditions.

In this environment, the adaption that has occurred is the ability to



consume insects and small animals. Carnivorous plants provide marvelous examples of convergent evolution where unrelated species develop similar characteristics to help them survive in the same environment.

In this short series I hope to explore and to share some fun facts that may be new to you. Take a deeper look into what constitutes a carnivorous plant, what is next for carnivorous plants in today's world of changing climates, and their role to us as we adapt by growing more food indoors.

See you next month!



“**Plastic Mulch – Does Color Matter?**”

from **VegEdge**

by Carol Ann Harlos
(via Margaret Raupp)

Research into the effectiveness of different colored mulches has been carried out at Penn State, Cornell, Clemson, and the University of New Hampshire.

Plastic mulches are used to increase the temperature of soil, to slow the growth of weeds, and to retain moisture in the soil. This article compares different colored plastic mulches and their effects.

Black plastic is inexpensive and absorbs all the colors of light, thus it warms soil quickly. This allows for earlier planting and earlier fruit (Peppers, tomatoes ... are botanical fruits).

Red plastic is more effective than black plastic for tomatoes, onions, peppers, strawberries, and eggplants. The plants grow thicker stems and larger leaves. This is due to the fact that red plastic reflects red and absorbs the rest of the color spectrum.

Green plastic works best for cucurbits (squash, pumpkin, zucchini, some gourds, watermelon, cucumbers, luffa) as it encourages fruit ripening.

White on top plastic (black underneath, white on top) is good for crops that prefer cooler soil temperatures. These include lettuce, the crucifers (broccoli, cauliflower).

Blue plastic helps produce higher yields for the summer squashes and cucumbers.

Silver plastic is highly reflective. Its major effect is the reduction of insects including aphids, whiteflies, and cucumber beetles. It also includes higher yields for peppers and squash.



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