FEROCIOUS FLORA

Normally, plants get all the nutrients they need to grow from the soil. But in waterlogged habitats like wetlands and swamps, the water has washed away most of the nutrients from the ground making it difficult for many plants to survive there. But some plants do very well in the harsh conditions of wetlands. They are carnivorous plants. Unlike all other plants on Earth, carnivorous plants don't have to get the nutrients they need to grow from the ground. They get them by eating animal flesh instead.

Carnivorous plants use the sneakiest of tricks to trap their animal dinners. First, they attract animals to them. Some do this by secreting a sweet, sugary liquid. Others produce beautiful bright flowers or an irresistible smell. Next, they trap the animal. Here's where things get really clever. Some carnivorous plants snap their leaves tightly shut around animals to create a plant prison. Others produce a sticky glue substance that makes it impossible for animals to escape. Some even use their leaves to create a deep tube filled with rain water to drown their prey.

What happens next? Once an animal is captured, it's time for the leaves to change from trap to stomach. Just like our stomach, the leaves of carnivorous plants emit acidic digestive juices. These juices dissolve the animal and the plant absorbs the nutrients. When dinner is over the leaves open again, the remains of the animal are thrown out, and the plant is ready to catch another victim!

The bladderwort plant is a pretty little plant that grows in swamps. Don't be fooled by the innocent look of its small purple flowers though. Bladderworts are the fastest-known killers in the plant kingdom. They have the ability to suck small fish and insects into their leaves in 1/50 of a second! And then there's the pitcher plant – a plant so big it can catch rats. The pitcher uses its leaves to create a deep container. Animals fall into the container and can't crawl out because the leaves are slippery and sticky. Meat-eating plants prove that real life sometimes really is stranger than fiction!

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 Carnivorous plants

A don't do as well as other plants in wetlands.

B get most nutrients from the soil.

C receive nutrients from other species.

D are the only plants able to survive in wetlands.

2 The leaves of all carnivorous plants can change

A shape.

B function.

C size.

D position.

3 When an animal is trapped in a carnivorous plant

A the leaves open immediately.

B the leaves produce a liquid that breaks meat down.

C the animal receives nutritious juices.

D the animal is used as bait for the next victim.

4 The bladderwort plant

A has got sticky leaves.

B eats big animals.

C hasn't got flowers.

D is a very rapid killer.



LIVEWORKSHEETS