News and views: John Hummer, A common garden experiment reveals two apparent forms of Sarracenia rubra subsp. wherryi

The title was changed for the electronic version 18 January 2026. The original is below.

NEWS AND VIEWS

BOB BARTLETT (30 Milina St., Hillman, Western Australia 6168) writes: Having known for a couple of years that The Kings Park Botanical Gardens in Perth, Western Australia had some carnivorous plants, it was pleasing to learn recently that they were now on display to the public in a A$350,000 glass house complex that had only recently been built.

I must say that I was very impressed with the display and the amount of space devoted to carnivorous plants. The area is about 70 ft. long by 4 ft. wide and is in one continuous section. The plants are protected by sloping glass which goes back about 30 in., leaving an area vacant for air flow. The *Sarracenia* on display were very impressive, having 30 in. pitchers. The species were *S. alata, leucophylla, psittacina* and *purpurea*. The plants of *S. purpurea* were particularly impressive and the dozen or so on display were quite the best I had ever seen of this species. Separated from the *Sarracenia* species were 30 or so hybrids which unfortunately weren't labeled separately, but several mostly consist of various *S. purpurea* crosses. I was also very impressed with display of *Cephalotus* with some of the clumps about 12 in. in diameter and pitchers 2½ in. long.

I counted eleven species of *Drosera* on display with these being: *D. capillaris, dielsiana, filiformis, adelae, hillaris, spathulata, capensis, rotundifolia, binata, aliciae* and *burkeana*. I must admit to being despondent at not finding any of the W.A. pygmy *Drosera* but these might be added later. Another impressive plant was *Byblis gigantea* which was in full flower at the time. Also shown were some *B. liniflora* that were much smaller. To complete the display, there were numerous plants of *Dionaea muscipula* which were in flower.

Perhaps the most interesting point about the display was that all species were receiving exactly the same conditions with regard to light, heat, water, etc., and as far as I could see, German peat moss was the sole item used as a potting medium. All species were well labeled, and a reasonable amount of information was displayed about CPs in general. I will be visiting Kings Park regularly to watch the plants mature, and I will be very interested to see how all grow together, bearing in mind that, generally we would grow some of these species differently from others in the collection.

In closing, I would certainly recommend that anybody visiting Perth, Western Australia would see the display at Kings Park, particularly as it is so close to the city center.

JOHN HUMMER (Insectivorous Gardens, 1705 N. Quebec St., Arlington, VA 22207) writes: I would like to report on some observations I've made on the multitude of *S. rubra* ssp. *wherryi* that I have grown in my backyard over the last 5 years. During this time, I have been sent several shipments of this species from two different sources, coming from different locations where this species grows. Having a lack of knowledge of field work on just where one encounters this species, I've had to rely on the knowledge of an associate, Phil Sheridan, who has seen many of these plants growing in southern Alabama. According to his observations, the species, or subspecies *S. rubra wherryi*, exhibits two distinct forms in morphology. To understand my wonder into this observation I must go back about three years, when I was sent what was supposed to be *S. rubra* ssp. *alabamensis* from an associate of mine, Bruce Bednar. He had stated at the time that all the plants at the locale he had collected the specimen from were obviously *S. alata*, but that this plant had *RED* flowers. This was confirmed to me about two years later, when the plant produced at least five, possibly 6 flowers. This mature plant, at the time, exhibited *none* of the characteristics that my other forms of *S. rubra* ssp. *wherryi* had shown, that is, the *expanded* upper column and the *prominent* undulated hood. What they did resemble was the pubescent form of *S. alata*. A short pitcher, mainly olive-green with red venation (not prominent), but otherwise none of the characteristics in the most recent general literature. This characteristic occurs throughout the entire growing season, and not just early spring or summer. Last spring I was sent a shipment of plants labeled *S. rubra* ssp. *wherryi*, from Mr. Bob Hanrahan which I didn't question in the least as being 'authentic'. Yet, during last year's growing season and this year's, the plants (about 50 or so in numbers) failed to produce anything approaching the descriptions in the most reliable literature (i.e., mature pitcher producing the expanding upper column and the marked undulated hood). I would like to point out, also, that both forms of the plants have been grown in like, or very similar, habitats. It is also interesting to note that the plants of the more "knowledgeable forms" maintained their more robust characteristics (expanded column and undulated hood) when grown under less characteristic conditions of their habitat (dryer and well-drained environment). At least, *under my authority they did.* As a result, with the help and advice of my associate, Phil Sheridan, I have been able to determine that there appears to be two distinct forms of *S. rubra wherryi* or ssp. *wherryi.* I have more than 50 plants of both forms and have been growing both near each other for several years. The differences between the two, for me, are too obvious to be ignored—by even the most conservative observer or botanist! Clearly, they're two different forms! One might surmise that these plants resembling the described *'Alata'* form are not actually hybrid forms of a cross with *that* plant. (Possibly, but the flowers of the plants are all *rubra* like and show no introgessed tendencies; that is, mixed flower color, intermediate leaf forms, etc.) Mr. Sheridan, who has been in the field location of *S. rubra* ssp. *wherryi* on both sides of the Mobile River, has further confirmed my wonder by stating that plants on the WEST side of the Mobile River assume the characteristics of the *S. alata* pubescent from, and on the *EAST* side, the literary form (i.e., the expanded upper column and undulated hood *BOTH PROMINENT*), the latter totally lacking in the 'westside' plants. Anyone who has further knowledge or is able to substantiate a challenge to this find is welcomed!

JOHN HUMMER also writes: As reported in the latest issue of *Nature Conservancy News*, of prime interest to all us lovers of *Sarracenia* is the organization's 'New Project' acquisitions for the near future. Chitwood Bog Dekalb Co. Ala., noteworthy for its thriving colony of green pitcher plants (*S. oreophila*), federally listed as endangered, this small seepage bog is a new Conservancy Project. Purchase of 53 acres safeguards the site, identified some years ago in the federal "recovery plan" for the plant. Chitwood is slated for management-under-lease to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

JOE MAZRIMAS reports that there is a Venus'-fly-trap look-alike coin bank available. When you put a coin on top of the plastic "flower," it opens and swallows it! With batteries, this "coin-ivorous" toy costs $18.36 (includes postage) and is available from: The Whole Mirth Catalog, 1034 Page St., San Francisco, CA 97117.

CURTIS YAX (233 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY 13820) writes: I was very disturbed to read THE ALBANY AREA, *CPN* 14(3): 74-76. *CPN* readers should be concerned with conservation and not the destruction of CPs and the wildlife that live near them.

Mr. Mann shows no respect for wildlife by shooting a snake which he could have easily walked away from, but instead, took the time to aim at and kill. Let's not go out and kill every living thing because of our delightful hobby. Instead, let us be good examples for others!