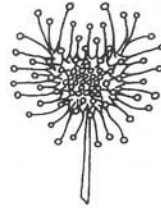


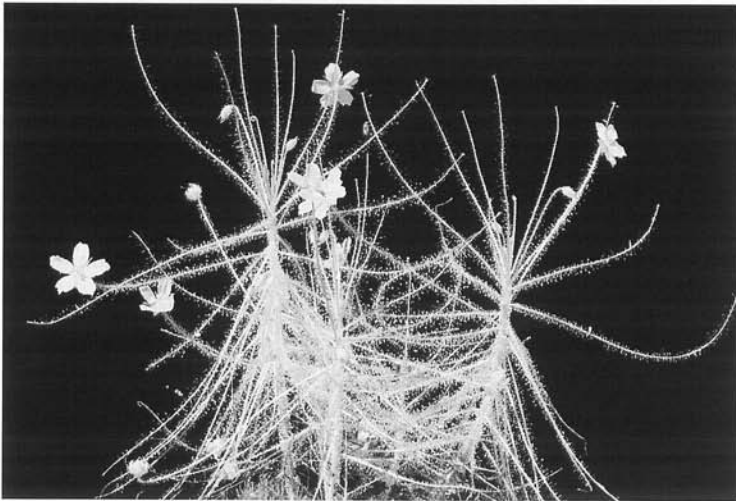
# THE SAVAGE GARDEN: SEASONAL CARNIVORES FOR THE BOG GARDEN

PETER D'AMATO  
California Carnivores



Keywords: cultivation: bog-garden

Many hobbyists in temperate, warm-temperate, and Mediterranean climates enjoy growing carnivorous plants outdoors year round in bog gardens and mini-bogs. Since these climates usually experience various amounts of cold weather and freezing temperatures, the plants chosen for such gardens are often cold hardy varieties that go dormant in winter. Plants selected are often American pitcher plants, Venus Flytraps, and hardy sundews and butterworts, such as *Drosera filiformis* or *Pinguicula longifolia*.



*B. liniflora*, by B. Meyers-Rice

One need not be limited to such a selection. There are several plants that can be grown in temperate bog gardens as annuals, or can be planted in the spring and removed in autumn before the first frosts. These plants offer unusual beauty to the bog that will last for most of the growing season.

One of my favorites as a seasonal candidate is *Byblis liniflora*, the Little Rainbow Plant. This species is a tropical annual when found in its native Northern Australia and New Guinea. While the climate is always warm, it is marked by six months of wet season and six months of dry. *Byblis liniflora* seeds germinate when the rains begin, and the plants mature rapidly, often flowering and setting seed when six to eight weeks old. They usually die off when the dry season returns and regrow from scattered seed the following year.

In cultivation, *Byblis liniflora* is often restricted to warm greenhouses and terrariums (it also is wonderful on sunny windowsills). Yet rarely does it occur to growers that the plant is well suited to any outdoor bog-garden that experiences several months of warm summer weather.

Simply scatter the poppy-like seed of *Byblis* in your garden during the spring. They thrive in the peat and sand soils most often used in bogs. As soon as the days are warm and the nights remain above 10–13°C (50–55°F), the seed will germinate and the plants will grow rapidly. Soon the glittering leaves of your rainbow plants will be continuously covered with their pretty amethyst colored flowers, putting on a spectacular show all summer long. Be sure to collect the seed as it develops, and store them dry in the fridge until the following year.

Another plant that can be grown in exactly the same manner is *Drosera burmanni*. This handsome rosetted sundew is well known for its rapidly moving tentacles, and while most forms are green, some turn a beautiful blush to crimson color in full sun and are best seen in colonies. *D. burmanni* is another tropical annual that grows throughout Australasia. When a few months old, the plants flower, set seed, and die. I have found that seed scattered in a bog will survive winter lows at least to -4°C (24°F), but it is wise to collect seed and store it over winter for the following year.

A third species I love to grow seasonally in my outdoor bog gardens is *Pinguicula lusitanica*. This tiny butterwort is native to Atlantic coastal Europe and northwestern Africa. At best it is a short-lived perennial, surviving light frost below 0°C (i.e., the low 20's °F). They grow rapidly from seed scattered in the bog and by late summer flower profusely, self-pollinating themselves. Check pods daily as they turn brown, for seed will be released quickly when the pods crack open. *Pinguicula lusitanica* is often seen as a green plant when grown in terraria, greenhouses and windowsills, but in full sun in a bog they will turn rosy pink with red veins running through their translucent leaves.

A really beautiful addition to bog gardens for the growing season are some of the Mexican butterworts, notably *Pinguicula moranensis* and its hybrids. These plants are long-lived perennials that turn into succulents during the dry but frost-free winters south of the USA border. Their compact, often clumping habits and short roots make them easy to transplant without injury. They are also quite tolerant of the peat and sand soils of bog gardens. I like to add them to my bogs when I am pretty sure no more frost will occur, which in northern California is mid-April. This usually coincides with the growth of their large, sticky summer leaves. It takes about two minutes to transplant one from its greenhouse-grown pot into the bog, using a tablespoon to lift the short roots and some soil from its container. In autumn, before the first frosts (usually November out here), I lift them out of the bogs in the same manner and return them to pots in the greenhouse. Good varieties to try are all of the *P. moranensis* types, cloned hybrids of *P. moranensis* × *ehlersiae* (*P.* × 'Sethos' and *P.* × 'Weser'), *P.* × "mola" and its hybrid cousins, plus *P. esseriana*, *P. ehlersiae* and even varieties of *P. agnata*. Aside from the startlingly beautiful flowers these plants produce in spring and late summer, the rich coloration of the foliage in sunlight will make you realize how much is missed when butterworts are grown in shaded greenhouses or under grow-lights. The abundance of insects the plants will catch also give them the energy to produce many clumps and offshoots.

Many warm-temperate and subtropical terrestrial bladderworts also are excellent seasonal additions to outdoor bogs. In spring, transfer small sections of the plants from their pots into your garden. They will rapidly spread and flower all season. In autumn, remove portions of the plants and repot these indoors for the winter. Excellent species that will add color to the savage garden are *Utricularia livida*, *U. sandersonii*, *U. dichotoma*, *U. graminifolia*, and other similar terrestrial species. Even so-called tropicals can do well, particularly *U. reniformis*, with its large "leaves" and ravishing orchid-like flowers. Plants left in the bog over winter will certainly die off in areas of severe cold, but can be reintroduced year after year, using potted plants as rejuvenating stock.

Be imaginative with your outdoor bog or mini-bog! Just like non-carnivorous annuals that people enjoy putting in their garden for one season only, the same approach can be used for insect-eating plants.