Name: _____ Date: _____

Plants That Catch Insects

Circle group

Plants get what they need from sunlight, air, water, and soil. But a few plants also trap and eat small animals, mostly insects. They are called carnivorous plants. Some are the Venus flytrap, the pitcher plants, and the sundews.

Why would a plant hunt? Most of them grow in bogs. The soil in a bog is wet and poor in nitrogen and other food for plants. Insects give the plant what the soil lacks. But insects are not the plant's main source of energy. The plant still makes sugar from sunlight. So the insects act like fertilizer.

Each plant has its own trap. The Venus flytrap has two leaves with tiny trigger hairs. If an insect touches the hairs more than once in a short time, the leaf snaps shut. This keeps the plant from closing on a false alarm, like a bit of drifting trash. A pitcher plant is a deep, slippery tube with liquid inside. An insect that lands on the rim may slip in and not climb out. A sundew has leaves with sticky drops that shine like dew. The drops hold the insect.

Scientists have found that these plants came from several separate branches of the plant family tree. So different plants found the same answer on their own. Some, such as the bladderworts, live in water. They trap tiny creatures in small bladders that work like suction traps and snap up prey that swims too close.

When a trap closes, enzymes break down the soft parts of the insect. The plant takes in the food. Many bogs have been drained, so some of these plants are now in danger in the wild.

Questions

1. What are three kinds of carnivorous plants?

_____

_____

2. Why do most of these plants grow in bogs?

_____

_____

3. Are insects the plant's main source of energy?

_____

_____

4. What makes a Venus flytrap close its leaf?

_____

_____

5. Why is it good for the flytrap to need more than one touch?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage say insects act like fertilizer?

_____

_____

Words to know

carnivorous: feeding on animals
bogs: wet, soggy places with soft, spongy ground
fertilizer: a material added to soil to help plants grow
enzymes: natural substances that help break down food

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Plants That Catch Insects

Triangle group

Plants usually get everything they need from sunlight, air, water, and soil. A few species, however, also trap and digest small animals, mostly insects. These are the carnivorous plants, and they include the Venus flytrap, the pitcher plants, and the sundews.

Why would a plant hunt? Most of these species grow in bogs, where the soil is soggy and poor in nitrogen and other nutrients. Insects supply what the soil lacks. The prey is not the plant's main source of energy, though. The plant still makes its sugar by photosynthesis, so the insects work more like a fertilizer.

Each kind uses a different trap. The Venus flytrap has hinged leaves lined with tiny trigger hairs. If an insect touches the hairs more than once in a short time, the leaf snaps shut. Needing more than one touch helps the plant avoid closing on a false alarm, such as a bit of drifting debris. Pitcher plants have deep, slippery tubes partly filled with liquid. An insect that lands on the rim may slip inside and be unable to climb out. Sundews have leaves covered in sticky droplets that glisten like dew and hold insects in place.

Scientists have found that carnivorous plants evolved in several separate branches of the plant family tree, which means that different plants arrived at the same solution on their own. Some, such as the bladderworts, live in water and trap tiny creatures in small bladders that work like suction traps, snapping up prey that swims too close.

After a trap closes, enzymes break down the soft parts of the prey, and the plant absorbs the nutrients. Because bogs have been drained in many places, some of these plants are now threatened in the wild.

Questions

1. What are three kinds of carnivorous plants?

_____

_____

2. Why do most carnivorous plants grow in bogs?

_____

_____

3. Is an insect the plant's main source of energy?

_____

_____

4. What makes a Venus flytrap close its leaf?

_____

_____

5. Why is it useful for the flytrap to need more than one touch?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage say the insects work like a fertilizer?

_____

_____

Words to know

carnivorous: feeding on animals
bogs: wet, soggy places with soft, spongy ground
fertilizer: a material added to soil to help plants grow
debris: small pieces of rubbish or broken material
enzymes: natural substances that help break down food

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Plants That Catch Insects

Square group

Plants ordinarily obtain everything they require from sunlight, air, water, and soil. A small number of species, however, have also evolved the ability to trap and digest small animals, chiefly insects. These are the carnivorous plants, a group that includes the Venus flytrap, the pitcher plants, and the sundews.

Why would a plant bother to hunt? Most of these species grow in bogs, where the soil is soggy and deficient in nitrogen and other nutrients. Insects supply precisely what the soil lacks. Nevertheless, the prey is not the plant's principal source of energy. The plant still produces its sugar through photosynthesis, so the insects function more like a fertilizer.

Each kind of plant uses a different kind of trap. The Venus flytrap has hinged leaves lined with tiny trigger hairs, and if an insect brushes the hairs more than once within a short time, the leaf snaps shut. Requiring more than one touch helps the plant avoid closing on a false alarm, such as a bit of drifting debris. Pitcher plants have deep, slippery tubes partly filled with liquid, and an insect that lands on the rim may slip inside and find it impossible to climb out. Sundews have leaves covered in sticky droplets that glisten like morning dew and hold insects firmly in place.

Scientists have discovered that carnivorous plants evolved in several separate branches of the plant family tree, which means that unrelated plants arrived at the same solution independently. Some, such as the bladderworts, live in water and trap tiny creatures in small bladders that work like suction traps, snapping up any prey that swims too close.

Once a trap has closed, enzymes break down the soft parts of the prey, and the plant absorbs the nutrients. Because bogs have been drained in many places, some of these remarkable plants are now threatened in the wild.

Questions

1. What are three kinds of carnivorous plants?

_____

_____

2. Why do most carnivorous plants live in bogs?

_____

_____

3. Is prey the plant's principal source of energy?

_____

_____

4. What causes a Venus flytrap to close its leaf?

_____

_____

5. Why is it helpful for the flytrap to require more than one touch?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage compare the insects to a fertilizer?

_____

_____

Words to know

carnivorous: feeding on animals
bogs: wet, soggy places with soft, spongy ground
fertilizer: a material added to soil to help plants grow
debris: small pieces of rubbish or broken material
enzymes: natural substances that help break down food

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Plants That Catch Insects

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Plants That Catch Insects

Easier · 277 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.3

1. The Venus flytrap, pitcher plants, and sundews.
2. Bog soil is poor in food for plants, and insects supply what the soil lacks.
3. No. The plant still makes sugar from sunlight.
4. An insect touching the trigger hairs more than once in a short time.
5. It does not close on a false alarm, like a bit of drifting trash.
6. They give the plant food that the poor soil does not have.

Triangle: Plants That Catch Insects

This passage · 288 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.6

1. The Venus flytrap, pitcher plants, and sundews.
2. Bog soil is poor in nutrients, so the insects supply what the soil lacks.
3. No. The plant still makes its sugar by photosynthesis.
4. An insect touching the trigger hairs more than once in a short time.
5. It avoids closing on a false alarm, such as drifting debris.
6. They give the plant nutrients that the poor soil does not have.

Square: Plants That Catch Insects

Harder · 309 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.8

1. The Venus flytrap, the pitcher plants, and the sundews.
2. Bog soil is deficient in nutrients, and insects supply what the soil lacks.
3. No. The plant still produces its sugar through photosynthesis.
4. An insect brushing the trigger hairs more than once within a short time.
5. It avoids closing on a false alarm, such as drifting debris.
6. They provide nutrients that the poor soil does not contain.