

GEHR Watershed Minute #35

Carnivorous Plants: (231 words)

The Great Egg Harbor Watershed is host to several species of plants that trap and consume insects. These carnivorous or insectivorous plants have adapted to grow in places where the soil is thin or poor in nutrients by trapping insects for additional nutrition.

Aquatic bladderworts live in wet swamps and bogs, and capture small organisms by means of bladder-like traps. When prey animals like mosquito larvae brush against trigger hairs connected to the trapdoor, the bladder sucks in the door and the prey, along with the water surrounding it. Once the bladder is full of water, the door closes again, the whole process taking only ten to fifteen thousandths of a second.

Sundews are carnivorous plants with sticky flypaper leaves that trap small flying or crawling insects and then dissolve them. Spatula leaf, Round leaf, and Thread leaf Sundews live in dryer swamps and bogs in the watershed.

Pitcher plants are carnivorous plants found in wet swamps, bogs, and on the banks of rivers and lakes. Their prey-trapping mechanism features a deep rolled leaf cavity filled with digestive enzymes. Foraging, flying or crawling insects are attracted by colors and nectar to the cavity formed by the cupped leaf. The sides of the pitcher are slippery and may be grooved in such a way so as to ensure that the insects cannot climb out and are gradually dissolved in this pitfall trap.