



## Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article      June 25, 2018

### Beautiful but Beastly: Pitcher Plants by Lydia Holley

Want an eye-catching addition to your garden? Interested in growing a conversation piece? Try your hand at growing *Sarracenia*, the pitcher plant. Pitcher plants grow in bogs, and many are native to the United States.

They are also carnivorous. They can grow in soil with few nutrients because they get additional nutrients from the animals they devour. For optimal impact, grow your pitcher plants where you can show guests this unique ability. Flies, wasps, and mosquitoes may be some of the insects your pitcher plants will catch.



It is easy to make your own container bog in which to grow pitcher plants. The biggest problem may be whether you want a small container bog to place close by, or if you would like a larger bog planted in your landscape.

Once you have decided where you want to grow pitcher plants, a bog can be easily made by purchasing a container, such as a pond liner, that has no drain holes. The container may be as large as you would like, but should only be approximately six to 24 inches deep, although eight to 12 inches is ideal. Your container may be set out in the open or planted in the ground.

Next add soil to your container. Start with a layer of gravel and top with a mix of sphagnum peat moss and sand. The fun part is in choosing your pitcher plants. There are around 20 types of pitcher plants from which to choose, some larger or taller than others, some are colorful or veined.

The most popular pitcher plants are *Sarracenia flava*, *Sarracenia alata* (which can grow up to six feet tall), *Sarracenia psittacina* (a red colored species that grows in a prostrate manner), and *Sarracenia leucophylla* (known as the crimson pitcher plant). The crimson pitcher plant only grows to 20 inches tall, but is highly veined with a red bloom and a delicate fragrance.

Pitcher plants grow in full sun. Be certain the pitcher plants you choose are hardy if you plan to leave them outside during the winter. In order to reduce weeding, plant your container densely. A layer of mulch will also help keep weeds from germinating and reduce the impact of rainfall on the container's soil. Remember, this is a bog garden, so water when necessary.

If you are looking for an easy way to impress, look no father than pitcher plants.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com) or visit [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg).