

GROWING CARNIVOROUS PLANTS IN ITALY

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It is not often you have had the opportunity to read in Carnivorous Plant Newsletter something that was written by an Italian. Perhaps it is even the first time in the history of Carnivorous Plant Newsletter. Well, from the land of pizza and spaghetti I will tell you the latest news.

In the past few months I visited three carnivorous plant collections in three different cities: Udine, Bologna and Firenze (Florence). In Udine, the most important event of the first official Italian carnivorous plant meeting was the presence of a foreign guest—Fernando Rivadavia, the well known expert on Brazilian carnivorous plants. He showed and commented on some fantastic slides of the flora of South America. The meeting was in Udine because this city has the largest private collection and the only nursery of carnivorous plants in Italy, managed by Furio Ersetti and his wife Lilli Almacolle.

I wish to mention some plants that I have seen there—very beautiful specimens of *Heliamphora nutans*, *Darlingtonia*, *Cephalotus*, a *Sarracenia flava* var. *maxima* more than 1 metre high, and a completely black *Sarracenia purpurea* subsp. *venosa* var. *burkii* that Furio bought as the variety “Louis Burke”. Near Udine there are other carnivorous plant growers with good collections, such as Lauro Tonini who has impressive *Cephalotus* and *Darlingtonia*. In addition, Fiorello Verona built in his garden a small artificial peat bog for his plants.

Months later I decided with two other friends, Vittorio Saporiti and Alessandro Delfrate (the only carnivorous plant enthusiasts living in Milano), to visit the collection of Andrea Amici, in Bologna. I can not say that I love carnivorous plants as if they were my children, but the passion of Andrea is almost pathological. Anyway, he has a little greenhouse in his garden, with very beautiful *Sarracenia* species (in particular a splendid *S. purpurea* f. *heterophylla*) and hybrids, a threatening *Cephalotus*, a poetic *Nepenthes gymnamphora*, and some provocative *Drosera regia* and *D. falconeri*. I think the health of his plants is due not only to Andrea's devotion, but also to the great quantity of insects that enter the open greenhouse to feed the hungry pitchers.

The best plants are surely the ones of Sergio Cecchi who lives in Firenze. The species are the same, but the worrying thing is the magnitude of their dimensions: 8 cm *Cephalotus* pitchers, 60 cm *S. minor*, 2 meter *N. × ventrata* (with 15 cm pitchers), 5 cm *U. alpina* flowers, and so on. I have seen also some *Ibicella lutea* and *I. fragrans*, with really lovable sewer-smelling flowers. (The taxon “*Ibicella fragrans*” has recently been renamed *Proboscidea louisianica* subsp. *fragrans*—ea.). Nearly all the plants are grown in pure, green, big, succulent live *Sphagnum*.

In the future maybe I will see also the collection of Gianni Benetti, in Rovigo, who has really thriving plants. Here in Italy there are not many carnivorous plant enthusiasts, so I wanted you to know of their existence. Where the sun shines and everybody is happy, there are some people who have the problems of trying to find others really interested in carnivorous plants, and also those plants that are impossible to obtain (if you are lucky, you can find only a few *Dionaea*, *Pinguicula* and *D. capensis* in shops).

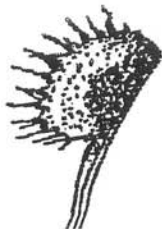
We are establishing a society and if other Italian members of the ICPS want to have information they can write to my address. I sent a letter to some ICPS members to send me *Nepenthes* photos to make a book. The help was very useful and this will be the first Italian carnivorous plant book. If it is successful, I will write a book on *Sarracenia*, and so on. Except for a few hybrids, I do not have many *Nepenthes* species. I grow some lowland species, but they are from tissue culture and too small to be good models.

So, from the smog of Milano, that is all the news. We are few, but diehard. *Ciao*.



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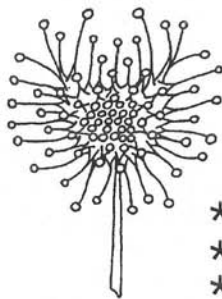
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