

THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS GUIDE

Which water is OK?

Water is vitally important to carnivorous plants – not just the amount but the type.

As a rule Venus Fly Traps are possibly the most sensitive, going black in a matter of weeks if hard water is used. Pinguicula or Butterworts are far more tolerant of lime.

It is lime and dissolved minerals they don't like - they need an acidic water. You can get a simple pH tester from an aquatics shop to test your tap water if you are not sure. You are looking for a figure of around 5.5 or lower. Your water board will be able to tell you the hardness of your water, and it is something you may have had to find out to install a dishwasher – soft water requires little or no salt. Less than 100ppm of dissolved solids is OK.

The following table shows which water to use and which to avoid.

	
Rainwater- don't worry if it looks dirty!	Bottled mineral water
Deionised water – as used in steam irons, or battery top up water	Hard tap water - if you must , boil it and cool it first.
Distilled water - if you happen to work in a lab.	Water from a fish pond that may be high in nitrates from the fish waste
Water collected in a dehumidifier, from a tumble drier or ice from defrosting a freezer (not the ice in the ice cube tray). This is all pure water.	Water from a natural spring that flows through limestone – you need to know your local geology for this!
Brita type filtered water	Softened water that has passed through a water softener.
Tap water if you have soft water - generally Devon and Cornwall, West Wales, north and west of Leeds (not Newcastle). Check with your water board.	
Water from a reverse osmosis unit.	

But remember – some water is better than no water so use boiled tap water in an emergency and keep your best water for the Venus Fly Traps.

If you do have to compromise on water, repot your plants with fresh compost annually.