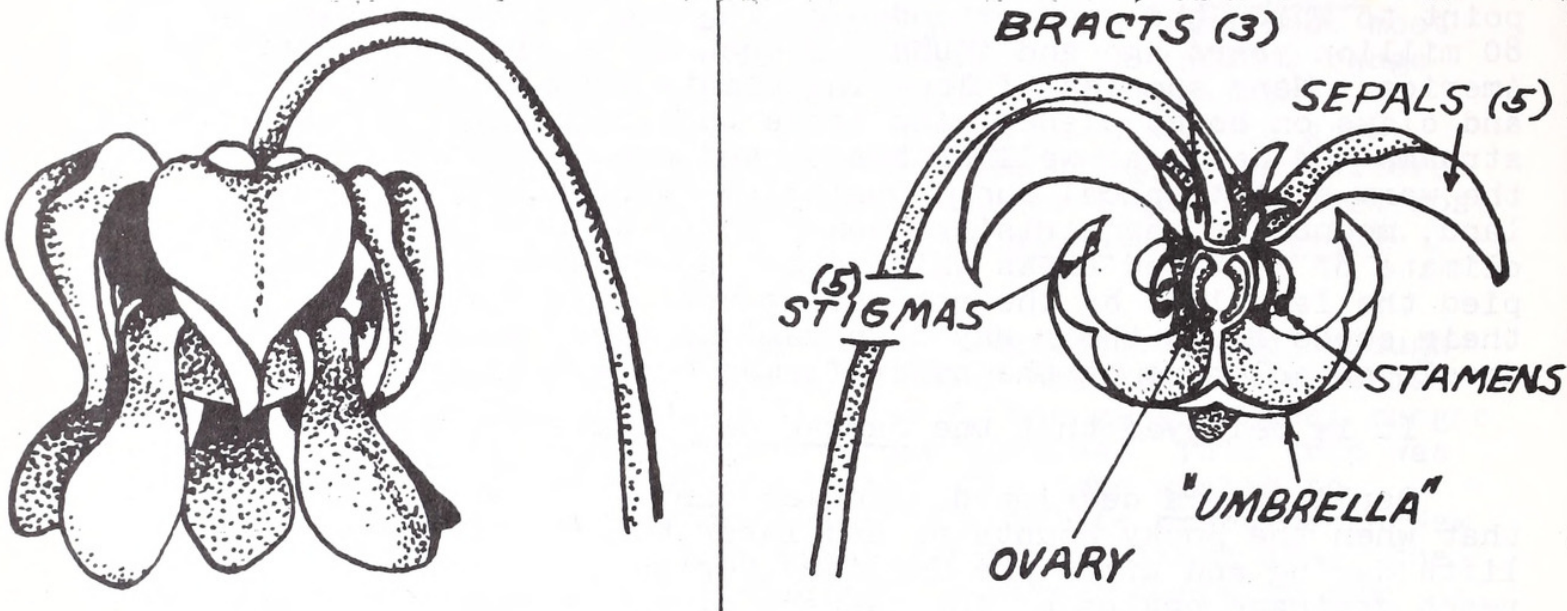


POLLINATION OF SARRACENIAS BY HAND

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Several people have written and asked about pollinating Sarracenias, so here goes. First of all, review the general plan of dicot flower anatomy if you are not familiar with it. The flowers of this genus are so constructed that natural cross-pollination is almost assured. Note that the five pendulous petals of an essentially upside down flower hang over the deep arcs of an inverted umbrella-like structure. The "umbrella" is really an expanded portion of the style connecting the stigma lobes with the ovary. Careful inspection of the five upward pointing tips of the inverted "umbrella" discloses a small, narrow cleft, and at the bottom of this cleft on the inside surface of each umbrella tip is a tiny projection that is a stigma lobe, the portion that receives pollen. After the flower has been out for three to five days, usually when petal color is at maximum, lift or remove a petal and note that the yellow, powdery pollen has "puddled" into the inverted dome of the umbrella, having fallen from the ripened stamen anthers hanging above. The pollen can easily be removed with the flat end of a toothpick and then applied to stigma lobes of the same or another flower of the same or other Sarracenia species. Sarracenias are notorious hybridizers, so change toothpicks (brushes are too hard to clean and too expensive to use once) and thereby avoid pollen "contamination" where not wanted. Oh yes, if your plants are outdoors or otherwise exposed to potential insect pollinators and you wish to keep everything straight, cover each flower with some sort of light bonnet, such as can be made with an unfolded 4x4 first aide gauze pad over the flower and snugged(not strangled) around the flower stalk. Smaller flowers(e.g. S. psittacina) require more dexterity, but then you will appreciate the gymnastics an insect pollinator must go through. Not only is the pollen in an essentially curtained off antrum, the stigma lobes are tucked out of breezes, and pollen will not fall up.



Schnell, Donald and Kutt, David. 1973. "Pollination of Sarracenias by Hand." *Carnivorous plant newsletter* 2(3), 40-40.

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