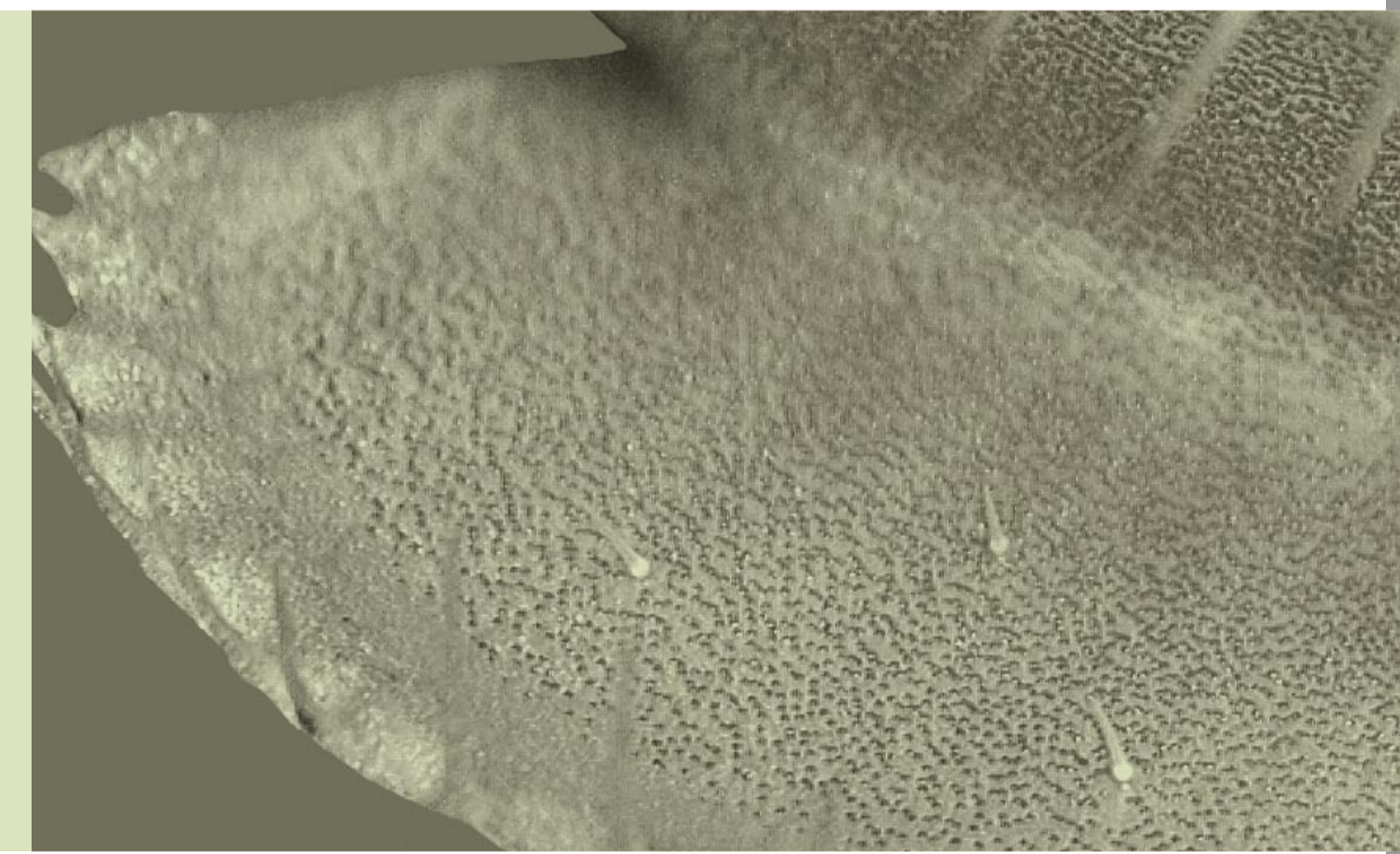


Meat Eaters

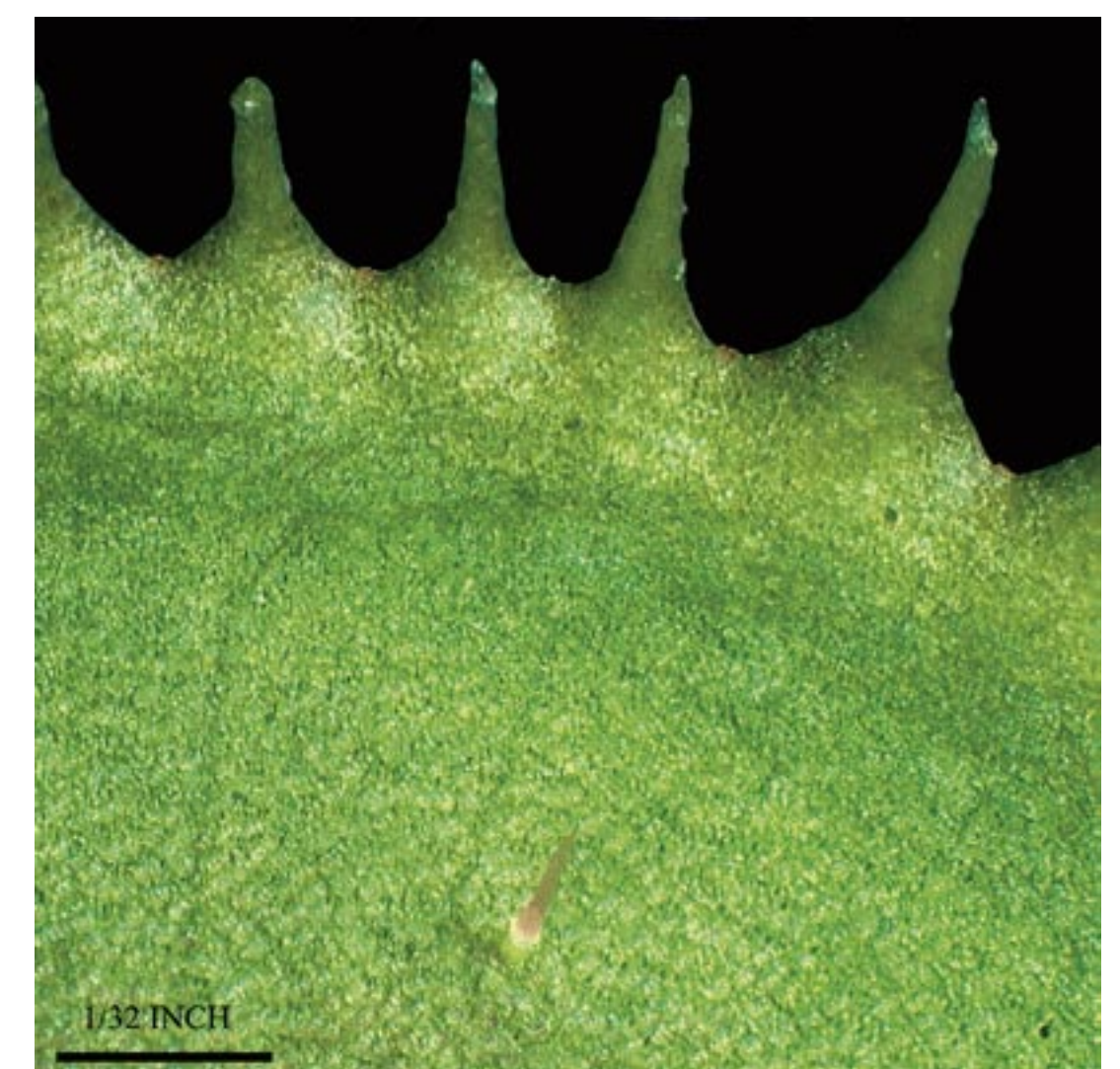


Carnivorous plants are adapted to soils that are low in nitrogen, an element that is critical for plants to synthesize protein. Their protein needs are met by consuming insects or in rare cases small animals. Various adaptations have evolved to lure, capture, and digest prey.



Venus flytrap

Venus flytrap, *Dionaea muscipula*, lures insects into colorful, nectar-containing traps, which are remarkable modified leaves. The traps have three trigger hairs on each side, which when touched cause the trap to close suddenly. Interlocking teeth along the edge prevent escape, while digestive fluids break down all but the insect's exoskeleton. Flytraps are native to a very limited region within 100 miles of Wilmington, North Carolina.



Trigger hair inside flytrap and teeth along the trap's edge



American pitcher plant

Species of **pitcher plants** grow in both temperate and tropical zones. Leaves of the American pitcher, *Sarracenia purpurea*, are modified into tubes that attract insects with color and nectar. Prey fall into the tube and are prevented from climbing out by the pitcher's downward-facing hairs. The breakdown of the dead insects provides nutrients to the pitcher plant.



Sticky droplets atop glandular hairs on sundew leaves

Sundews, *Drosera* species, are the most diverse group of carnivorous plants and are found on all continents. Their leaf surface is covered with stalked glandular hairs that look like tentacles. The glands exude sticky droplets, which appear as nectar to insects but are instead a glue-like substance. Once an insect is stuck, the stalked hairs slowly bend over and release enzymes that digest the insect.