It has been a great season for the orchid room this year. The orchids have been, and still are, showing their splendor. The orchids began blooming in early Spring and are still sending out new flowers as we enter Fall. Many of the orchids have flowered twice and some are beginning their third set of blooms for the season. You can see some of the orchids that bloomed at our web page: http://www.life.uiuc.edu/plantbio/greenhouse/. Look under Virtual Tour and then go to Orchids.

In one of the past newsletters, I talked about the epiphyte tree that is being built in the conservatory. The tree is in place and ready to be ‘planted’. Now comes the decision of what to put on the tree!

Some of the most interesting plants in the collections are the carnivorous plants. The most well known, of course, is the Venus Fly Trap, made famous as Audrey in the movie ‘The Little Shop of Horrors’. However, there are many more carnivorous plants, while not as well known as the Venus Fly Trap, are just as interesting. There are sundews that have hairs with drops of ‘sticky dew’ on the tips of the hairs to capture it’s prey. Our own native American Pitcher plants that grow along the Southern and Southeast Coastal States from Alabama to North Carolina. With the American pitcher plants, the leaves are modified as tubes that capture insects. The pitchers produce nectar at the top of the tube. While eating the nectar, the insects become intoxicated and fall into the tube. One other carnivorous plant that will be found in the Plant Collections is Nepenthes, the tropical pitcher plant. Most of the Nepenthes are found in the tropical forests of Indonesia. The leaves of these plants are modified so that at the tip of the leaf a pitcher is formed. These plants are similar to the American Pitcher plants in that they produce nectar at the top of the pitcher which will intoxicate the insect. If you live close enough to the University, you can still see the pitcher you see above, Nepenthes truncate. This pitcher measured almost fourteen inches in height.

I would like to thank all who have been generous and made donations to the conservatory. Your donations make the small improvements like the epiphyte tree possible.

Below is a list of the upcoming weekends that the Conservatory and Plant Collections will be open during the 2005-2006 School Calendar Year:

December 2 & 3, 2005 –Poinsettia Show

March 11 & 12, 2006 - Open House - "Rhapsody in Blue" (An event highlighting blue flowers )

April 8 & 9, 2006 -Mom's Day Weekend

June 10 & 11, 2006 - Plant Sale