

# Going Pitcher Plant Hunting

by Eric Sathre

Until recently I never realized how easy it is to find carnivorous pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*) in the wild. I discovered it when I took a trip up to Mexico Beach in north Florida. For most of the trip I would look out of the car window and say (while going 60 M.P.H.), "I think that's one!" I never really was sure if they were pitcher plants or not.

When we arrived at Mexico Beach I was ready to go out plant hunting, but instead my mother said we had to go to The Mall. On the second day we were going to go back, but the weather looked so bad in the direction of The Mall (where we had already spent too much money) that I — being a noble and modest leader — suggested we turn around and go plant hunting instead.

I looked at all the roads on the map, trying to find the one with the

most chances of being boggy. This meant that the road had to be close to several streams but far enough away from the beach so the plants wouldn't be exposed to the salt from the ocean.

On a gamble, I chose a small country road leading north. After traveling about halfway up the road, I "knew" I saw a *Sarracenia flava*. I hollered at the driver (my mother) to stop, and finally she did. To my utter delight, there *were* some!

I jumped out of the car whooping — and landed right in the muck in which they were growing.

Undeterred, I explored further. I came upon some flowers that were what I thought was more *S. flava*. When I looked closer I realized that they actually were *S. psittacina*! It was the happiest day of my life! My goal on the trip was to find *S. flava* and *S.*

*luccophylla*, but I never thought I would ever have a chance of seeing the low-growing *S. psittacina*. (Unfortunately, I never saw the *S. luccophylla*.)

I now noticed that instead of going 55 mph, my mother was doing barely 45. (I guess earlier she didn't really believe we would find them. Ha, ha, Mom.) We turned down yet another country road, and then I saw what I've wanted to see ever since I started raising carnivorous plants — an entire field of *S. flavas*! It was beautiful. For me, it represented the glory of all of nature. That was the event that made the trip so spectacular.

We turned around and headed home with that scene fixed in our minds forever.