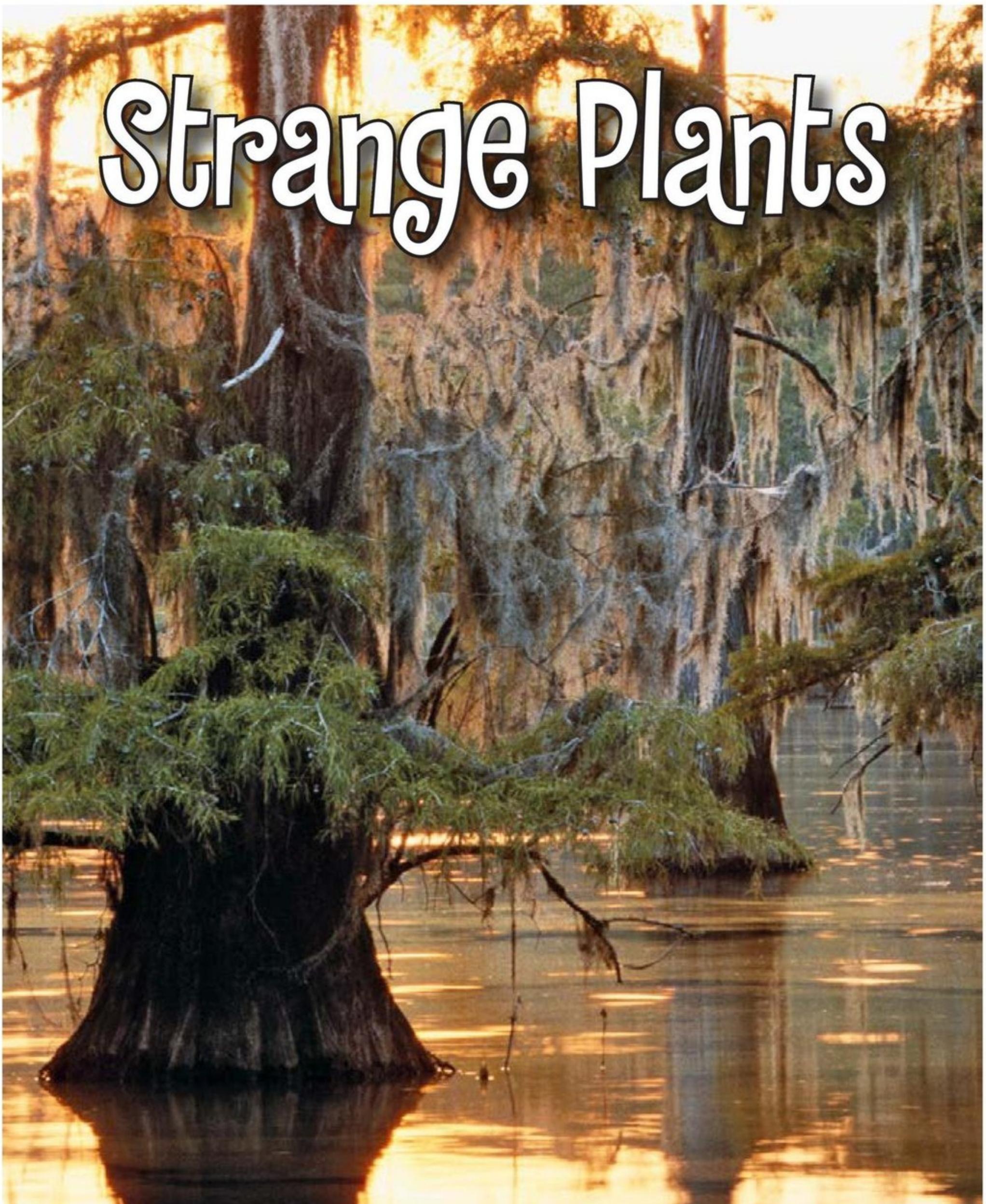


LEVELED BOOK • N

Strange Plants

MULTI
level
K•N•Q

Written by Kira Freed



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Focus Question

What makes some plants strange?

Words to Know

attracted
digests
moisture

odor
parasite
plants

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Correlation

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Gerbera daisies

When we think about **plants**, we often think of trees, flowers, bushes, and grass. Like most plants, these plants have green leaves and sometimes flowers. They also have roots growing into the ground.



Saguaro cactus

Some plants are different from most other plants. This book explores what makes some of these strange plants special.

Plants called air plants live in trees high above the ground in North and South America. Their roots are not buried in dirt. Instead, the plants grow on tree branches. They take **moisture** from the air through their leaves. They do not live in soil as most plants do.



Air plants growing on swamp trees



Can you imagine plants that eat meat? Well, there are such plants. They eat insects, spiders, and even some other small animals. Like all plants, they use sunlight and water to make their own food. The animals they “eat” on the side help them grow better, though.

One well-known meat-eating plant is the Venus flytrap. This plant lives in moist environments. Its leaves look like traps. They have small spikes along the edges. When a critter walks inside a leaf, the leaf snaps shut. The critter is trapped by the spikes.



Fly caught in a Venus flytrap

The sundew is another meat-eating plant that lives in moist environments. It catches its food in a different way. Sticky hairs on its surface smell sweet. Insects **attracted** to the smell land and get stuck. Then the plant **digests** the insects. The giant sundew plant of Australia even eats small frogs!



Sundew plant



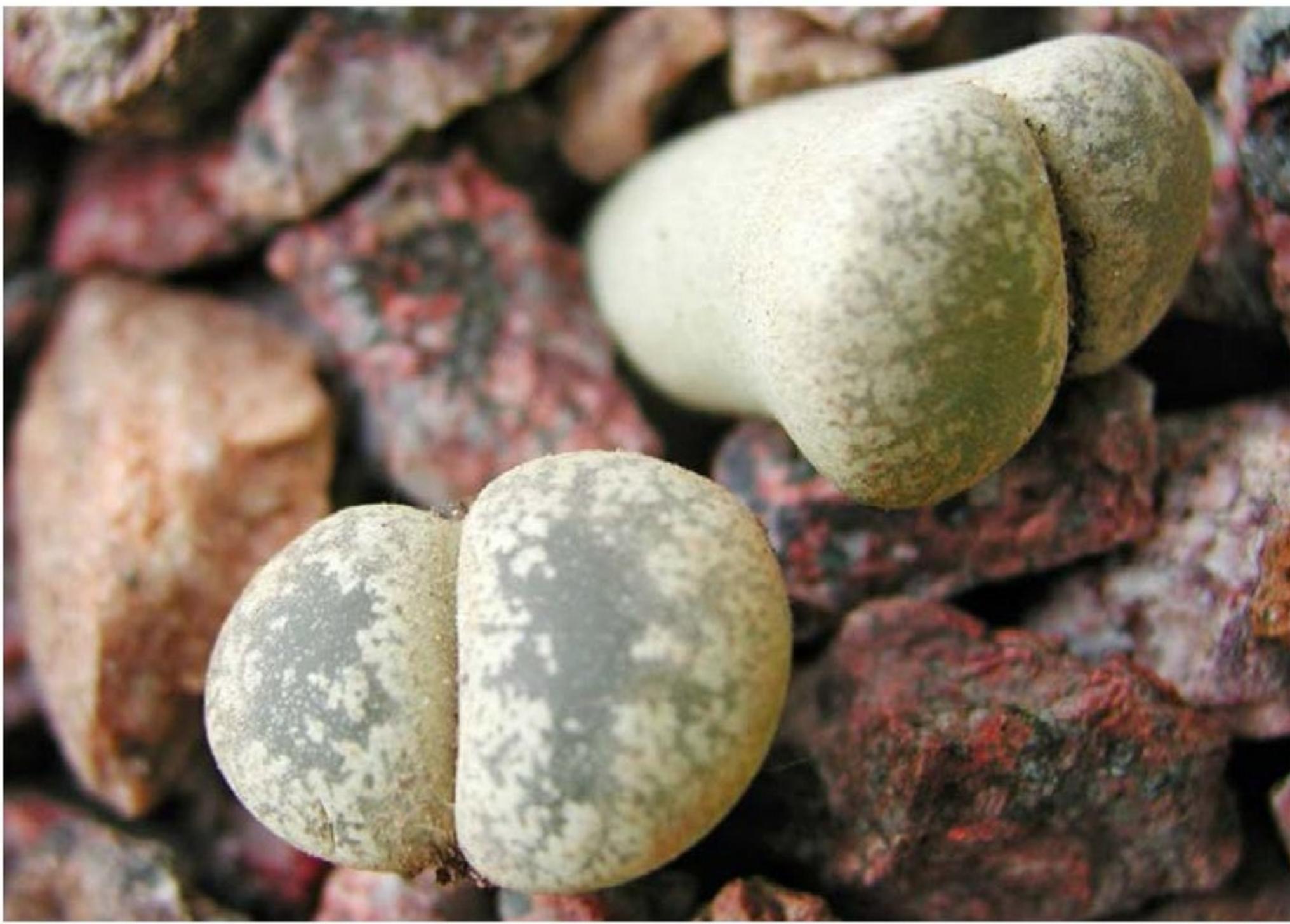
Dodder plant

Some plants steal food from other plants. The dodder plant lives on many continents but is most common in North and South America. It sends slender rootlike stems into another plant and sucks food and water from the plant. The dodder plant is a **parasite**—a living thing that lives off another living thing.

Many flowers have bad smells that attract insects. The stapelia flower, also called the “carrion flower,” smells like rotting meat. On hot days, the **odor** is noticeable from about 1.6 kilometers (1 mi.) away. Flies like the smell, so they fly into the flower. Special powder called “pollen” gets on their bodies. They carry the powder to other flowers. The flowers use the powder to make seeds and grow new plants.



Stapelia flower



Stone plants

Some plants look like stones. The plants in this picture are called “stone plants” or “living stones.” They live in very hot, dry places such as South Africa. They hold water very well because the biggest part of each plant lives underground. These plants usually have only two leaves. Their shape helps to hide them so that animals do not eat them.

Some cactus plants are covered with wool-like hairs. These plants come from the Andes Mountains in South America. The “wool” protects them from daytime heat and nighttime cold. The “wool” also helps the cactus plants hold moisture.



Old man cactus



Tree roots growing in rock

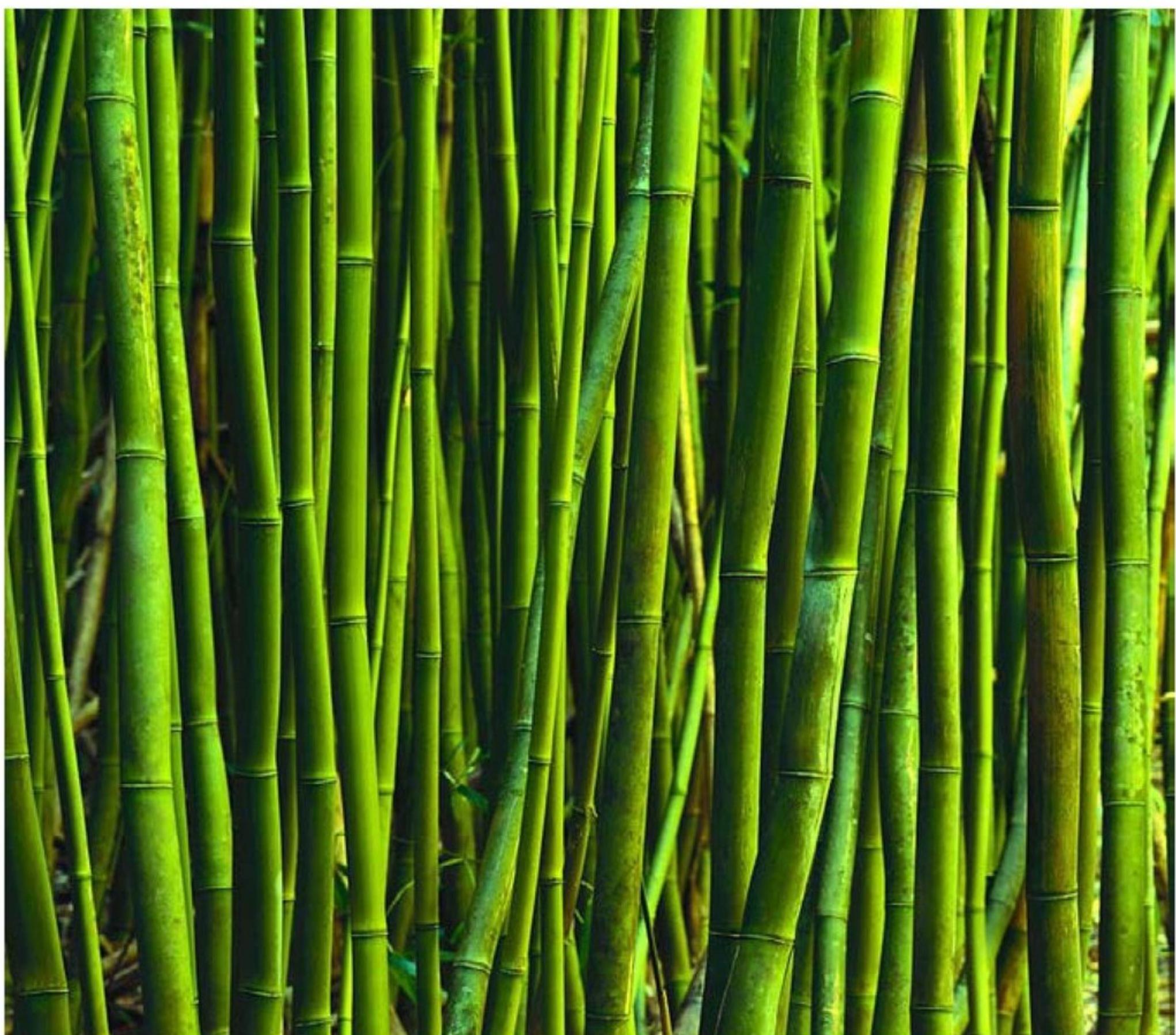
Some trees and shrubs grow out of solid rock. They grow up high where the wind blows strong. The wind can blow seeds into small cracks in the rock. Then the seeds start to grow. Their roots reach down into small cracks for moisture. As the roots grow, they split the rock.



Ant plant

Some plants have animals living inside them. Ant colonies live inside ant plants. The ants protect the plant from animals that would eat it. They use spaces in the plant's stem as houses. Some spaces are used for raising young ants. Other spaces are used for garbage. The ant plant uses some of this garbage for food.

There are many more kinds of strange plants. Bamboo makes noise when it grows. Some Australian orchids grow and flower completely underground. Bat plants have fruit that looks like bats hanging upside down from the flowers. There are many amazing plants in the world.



Bamboo shoots

Glossary

attracted (*adj.*) drawn near to someone or something (p. 8)

digests (*v.*) processes food in the body and turns it into energy (p. 8)

moisture (*n.*) a small amount of water in the form of a liquid or vapor (p. 5)

odor (*n.*) the scent or smell of something (p. 10)

parasite (*n.*) a plant or animal that grows on or feeds off another (p. 9)

plants (*n.*) living things that make their own food from sunlight and cannot move from place to place on their own (p. 3)

Strange Plants

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

Word Count: 620



Connections

Writing

Choose two strange plants from the book. Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the two plants.

Science and Art

Choose one strange plant from the book to research further. Draw a diagram of the plant and label its important features.



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