

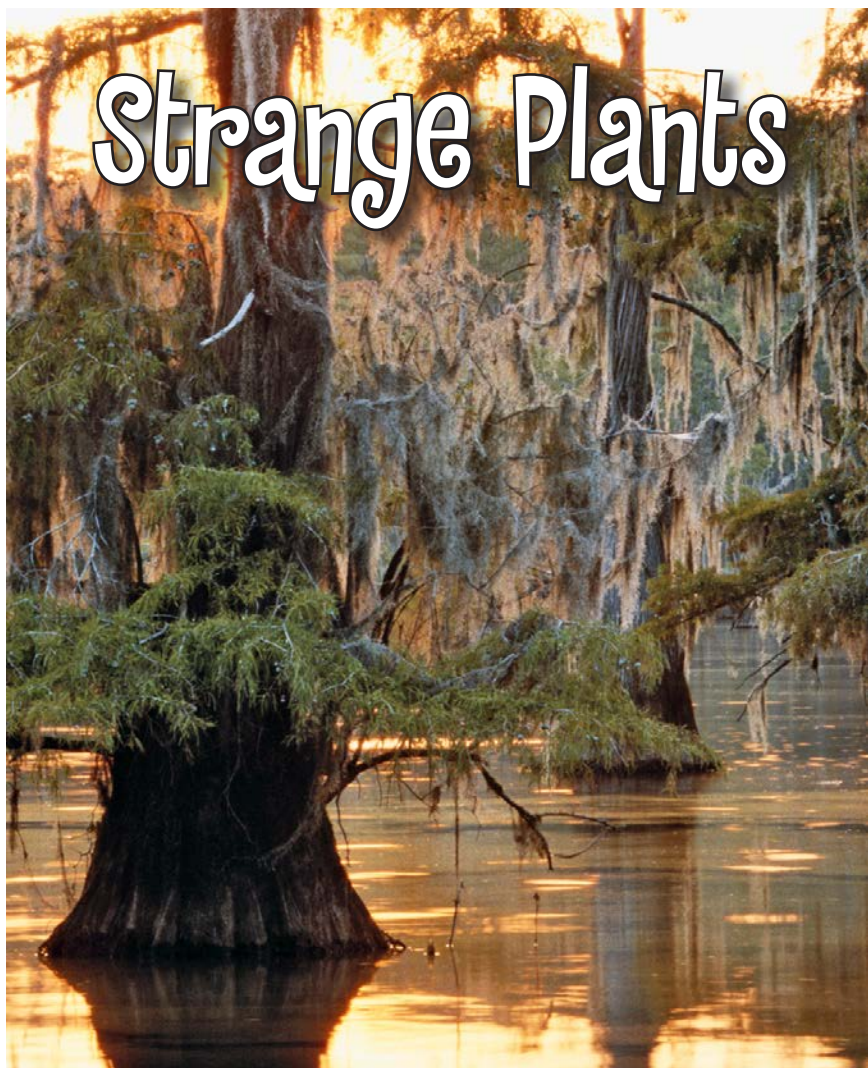
LEVELED BOOK • Q

Strange Plants

**Multi
level
K•N•Q**

Written by Kira Freed

www.readinga-z.com



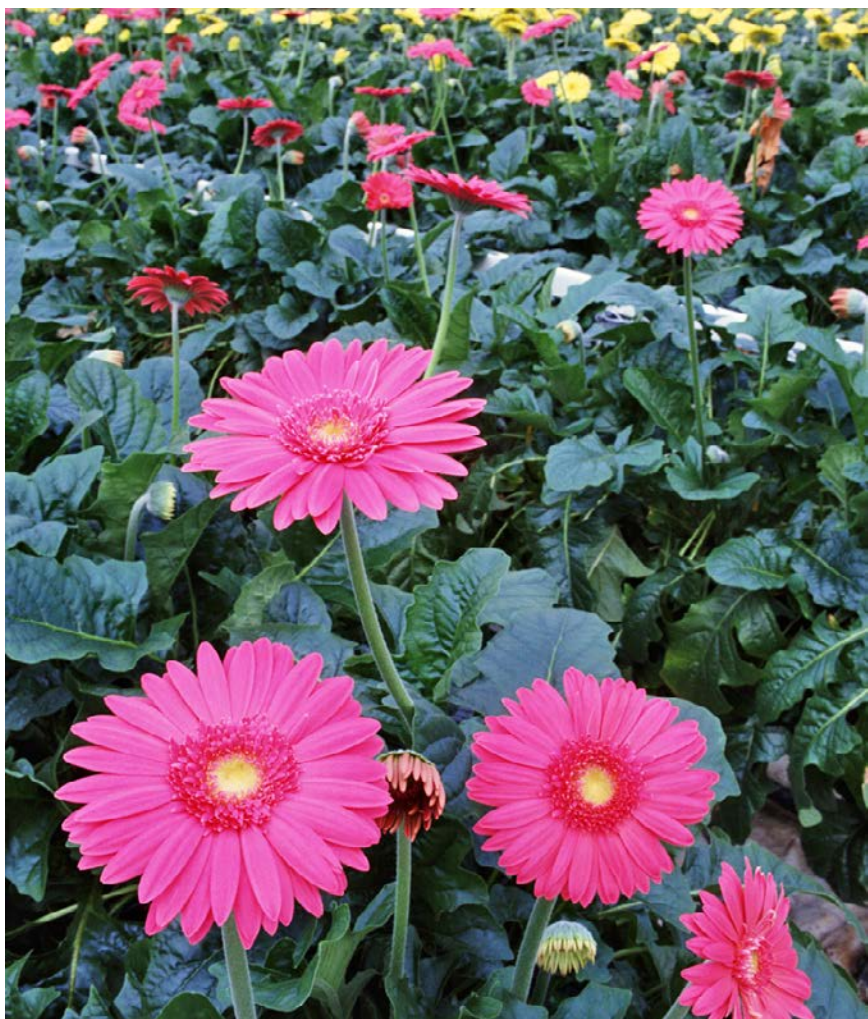
Strange Plants

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Focus Question

What makes some plants strange?



Gerbera daisies

When we think about **plants**, we often think of trees, flowers, bushes, and grass. We think about **organisms** that have stems, leaves, roots, and sometimes flowers. Most plants, such as the ones in this photograph, have roots that grow into the ground.



Saguaro cactus

While most plants have these four basic components, some plants are different. This book is about some of these strange plants.

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



Air plants growing on swamp trees



Venus flytrap

Can you imagine **carnivorous**, or meat-eating, plants? 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” help them grow better because these plants live in places where the soil doesn’t supply enough nutrients.

One well-known meat-eating plant is the Venus flytrap, which lives in moist environments. Its leaves look like traps. The traps have small trigger hairs on the inside. When a critter walks inside a leaf and brushes against the trigger hairs, the leaf snaps shut. The critter is then trapped.



Fly caught in a Venus flytrap

The sundew, another meat-eating plant that lives in moist environments, catches its food in a different way. It has many sticky hairs on its surface that smell sweet. Insects **attracted** to the smell land and get stuck. Then the plant **digests** the insects. The giant sundew plant of Australia, which can grow to 1 meter (3.28 ft.) tall, even eats small frogs!



Sundew plant



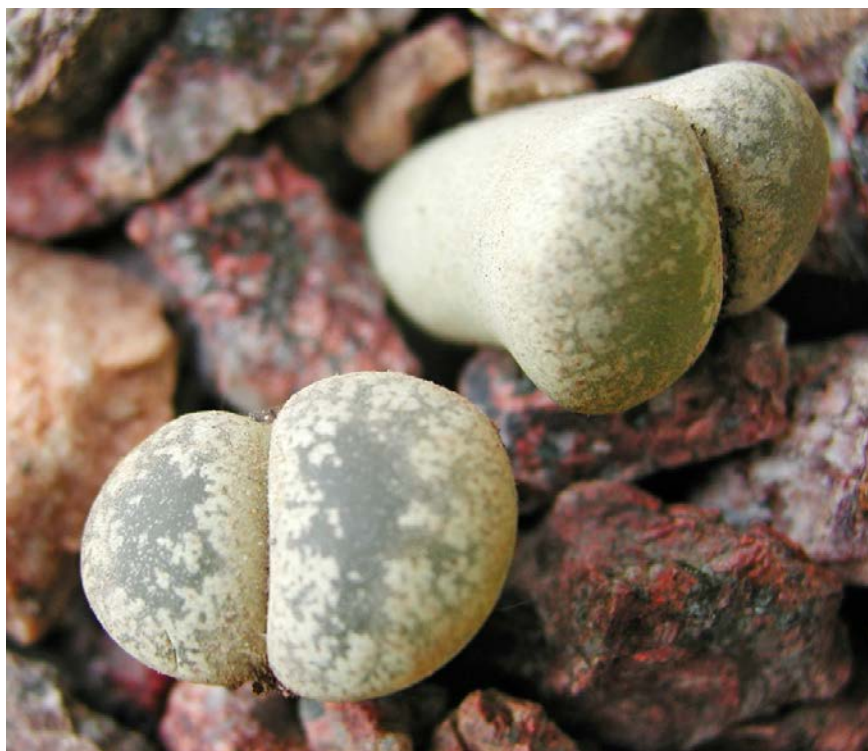
Dodder plant

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. These stems are pale green, yellow, or bright orange and are easy to see against the **host** plant. The dodder sucks food and water from the plant. It is a parasite—a living thing that lives off another living thing. When a dodder plant attaches to a host plant, its connection to the soil dies.

Many flowers have bad smells that attract insects. The stapelia flower, also called the “carrion flower,” **emits** an odor of rotting meat. On hot days, the odor is noticeable from about 1.6 kilometers (1 mi.) away. The flower has a pattern that looks like dead animals. Flies are attracted to the pattern and 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 rocks. The plants in the photograph above 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. They rarely grow more than 2.5 centimeters (1 in.) above the ground and have only two leaves. Once each year, these plants usually grow a white or yellow flower. Their shape helps to hide them so animals do not eat them.

Some cactus plants are covered with wool-like hairs. These plants come from Bolivia and Peru, high in the Andes Mountains of 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

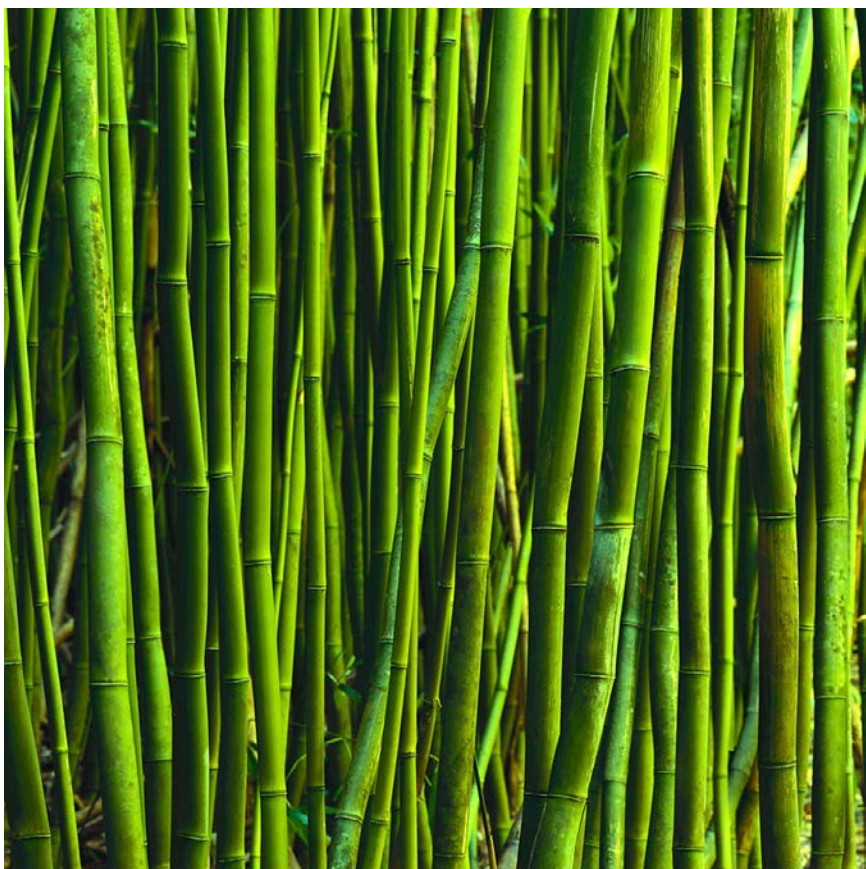
Some trees and shrubs grow out of solid rock. They grow up high where the wind blows strong. The wind can blow seeds into small cracks in the rock. When rain gets into the cracks, the seeds start to grow. Their roots reach down into small cracks for moisture. Once the roots are stable, the plants grow leaves to absorb sunlight and are then able to keep growing. As the roots grow, they split the rock.



Ant plant

Some plants have animals living inside them. Ant colonies live within ant plants. The ants protect the plant from animals that would eat it. The ants use natural cavities, or 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 and to spread its seeds.

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. Some ghost plants have white flowers that seem to appear out of nowhere. There are many amazing plants in the world.



Bamboo shoots

Glossary

attracted (<i>adj.</i>)	drawn near to someone or something (p. 8)
carnivorous (<i>adj.</i>)	eating only meat (p. 6)
digests (<i>v.</i>)	processes food in the body and turns it into energy (p. 8)
emits (<i>v.</i>)	sends out from (p. 10)
host (<i>n.</i>)	a plant or animal off which a parasite feeds (p. 9)
moisture (<i>n.</i>)	a small amount of water in the form of a liquid or vapor (p. 5)
nutrients (<i>n.</i>)	substances that living things need to live, stay healthy, and grow (p. 5)
organisms (<i>n.</i>)	living things (p. 3)
plants (<i>n.</i>)	living things that make their own food from sunlight and cannot move from place to place on their own (p. 3)

Words to Know

attracted

carnivorous

digests

emits

host

moisture

nutrients

organisms

plants

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Correlation

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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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