

Write Your Own Plant Play

Work with your friends to make up a play. First, write a script. Make most of the characters plants. Start by describing the setting, where the action takes place. Then list each character and tell what kind of plant he or she is. Finally, write the stage directions and dialogue. The stage directions tell what the characters do. The dialogue tells what they say. For example:

ROSIE: (swaying in circles) *I am so thirsty. My, how I wish it would rain.*



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Don't forget to give your play a title. Then practice your plant play a few times. When your group is ready, ask your teacher if you may perform it for the class.

Plant Family Feud

By Ron Fridell

Can a tree think? Does a weed have feelings? We used to think that plants were not very smart. After all, plants have no brains.

But now we're not so sure. Plants may be smarter than we think. Why? Two scientists have discovered a plant that can do what plants were not known to be able to do. It

seems to know which plants around it are its relatives, and which are not.

This plant is the Great Lakes sea rocket, a weed that grows on beaches of some lakes and oceans. Part of its seed pod can pop off like a rocket!

How did scientists make this amazing discovery? They planted groups of sea rockets in separate containers. Some containers had only sea rockets of the same family. Others had strangers—sea rockets of different families grouped together. The plants all got the same amount of soil, water, and light.



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The scientists observed the sea rockets each day. What did they learn? When a sea rocket realizes that nearby plants are not relatives, it gets selfish. It sends out long roots to grab nutrients for itself. Why? Plants must have nitrogen, carbon, and other nutrients in order to survive and grow.

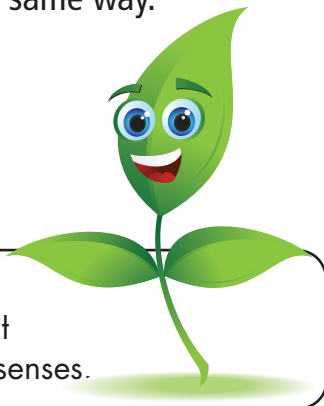
But when the nearby plants are family members, the sea rocket is not selfish. Instead of hogging the nutrients, it holds back its roots. It shares the nutrients with its family members.

How can sea rockets do this? Could they actually be "seeing" and "thinking" in



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their own special way? No one knows—yet. But scientists are searching for answers. They are also searching for other plants that "behave" in the same way.



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Try This

On a separate paper, draw a plant and label where you think it would experience each of the five senses.

Fun Facts: Plants with Senses

Do you think plants are just mindless vegetables? Think again. Here are three plants that sense and react to different things.

Sunflowers

Sunflowers track the Sun across the sky. At dawn they face the east. Then the buds swing slowly westward. At night they turn back eastward to wait for the dawn.



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Mimosa Plants

Mimosas react to touch. When a hungry animal touches the leaves, the leaves fold up and droop. That way the animal is likely to pass them up and eat something else.



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Venus Flytraps

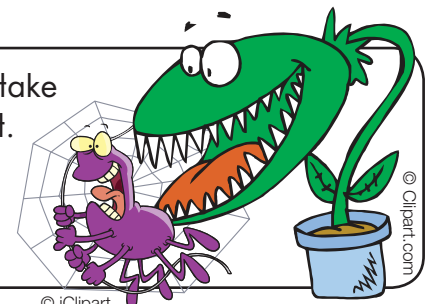
Venus flytraps are meat-eaters. Sensitive hairs tell them when an insect or spider is on their leaves. This makes the leaves close up and trap their victim.



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WOWSER!

The leaves on a Venus flytrap take just half a second to snap shut. Their prey becomes trapped! But the plant needs about ten days to digest it.



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