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## Introduction: Why Plants?

Plants can be giant (the rafflesia of Sumatra has a flower that weighs 7 kg), explosive (Scotch broom flowers explode open when a bee lands on them), tricky (carnivorous plants bait and trap animals for food) and all-round peculiar!

Children will learn about the exciting plant world while practising writing, reading, research, performance and speaking skills. They'll learn how plants grow, give fairy ring reports, weigh a coconut, learn about 'walking' trees, star in a musical revue and much more. Most of the activities can easily be simplified for younger children or extended for upper years. This book will enhance learning in many subjects through exploration of the plants in our world.

*Peculiar Plants!* is divided into four parts (plus a resource section). **Hands-On Discoveries** contains activities that allow children to participate in answering science questions they may have, for example, 'How do Venus flytraps work?' or 'How do cacti drink?' Reproducible sheets have information or directions written specifically for the children. These sheets are marked with a special leaf icon.

**Nonfiction Book Links** features speaking, writing and reporting activities based on nonfiction resources. Most activities are accompanied by helpful handouts that lead children through the research procedure. When research is required, you have the option of letting children look for the facts needed in the library (or in books you've checked out ahead of time). Or they may use the 'Super-Duper Fact Cards' located in the resource section at the back of this book. These cards list information for 16 unusual plants. Duplicate the cards onto neon-coloured paper and cut them out. Laminate the cards and cut them out again, making sure to leave a thin laminate border to prevent peeling. Keep the cards in a box for children to choose from when doing their research. These cards also provide an opportunity for younger children to do research by giving them needed information in a simple, easy-to-understand format.



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The **Fiction Book Links** section uses storybooks to introduce information about interesting types of plants, such as the ones in *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*. This section's activities, projects and language extensions help children connect with both real and fictional plants. Each 'Link' also includes a tongue twister. You can challenge children to create their own twisters from the plant facts they've learned. Also included in this section are decorating suggestions for 'setting the stage' for each particular book.

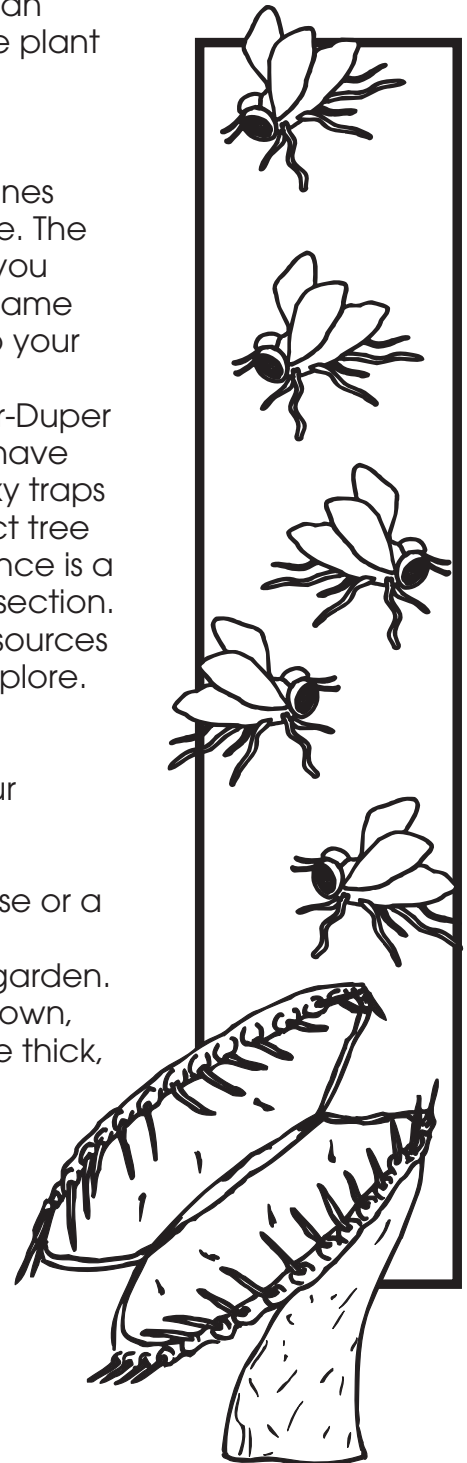
**It's Show Time!** presents new songs sung to old tunes and costume suggestions for putting on a performance. The songs can be duplicated and given to the children. If you want to hold a performance, write each performer's name on the reproducible program page and give copies to your audience.

Each of the first three sections ends with a 'Super-Duper Project', an activity that uses the information children have learned in the unit. These projects include building tricky traps (similar to the carnivorous Venus flytrap), creating a fact tree forest and writing new plant fables. A choral performance is a possible 'Super-Duper' ending for the 'It's Show Time!' section.

The last two pages of the book are nonfiction resources to share with children and plant-related Websites to explore.

### **Suggestions for Extending Lessons:**

- Invite a representative from a nursery to speak to your children.
- Have children observe plant life around them.
- Go on a field trip to a botanical garden, a greenhouse or a neighbourhood park.
- Grow flowers in a window box or start a simple herb garden.
- Grow an avocado tree: suspend the pit, large end down, with toothpicks over a water-filled glass. When roots are thick, plant in soil with half the seed exposed.



# Serve a Salad

## Materials:

Drawing paper, crayons or textas

## Directions:

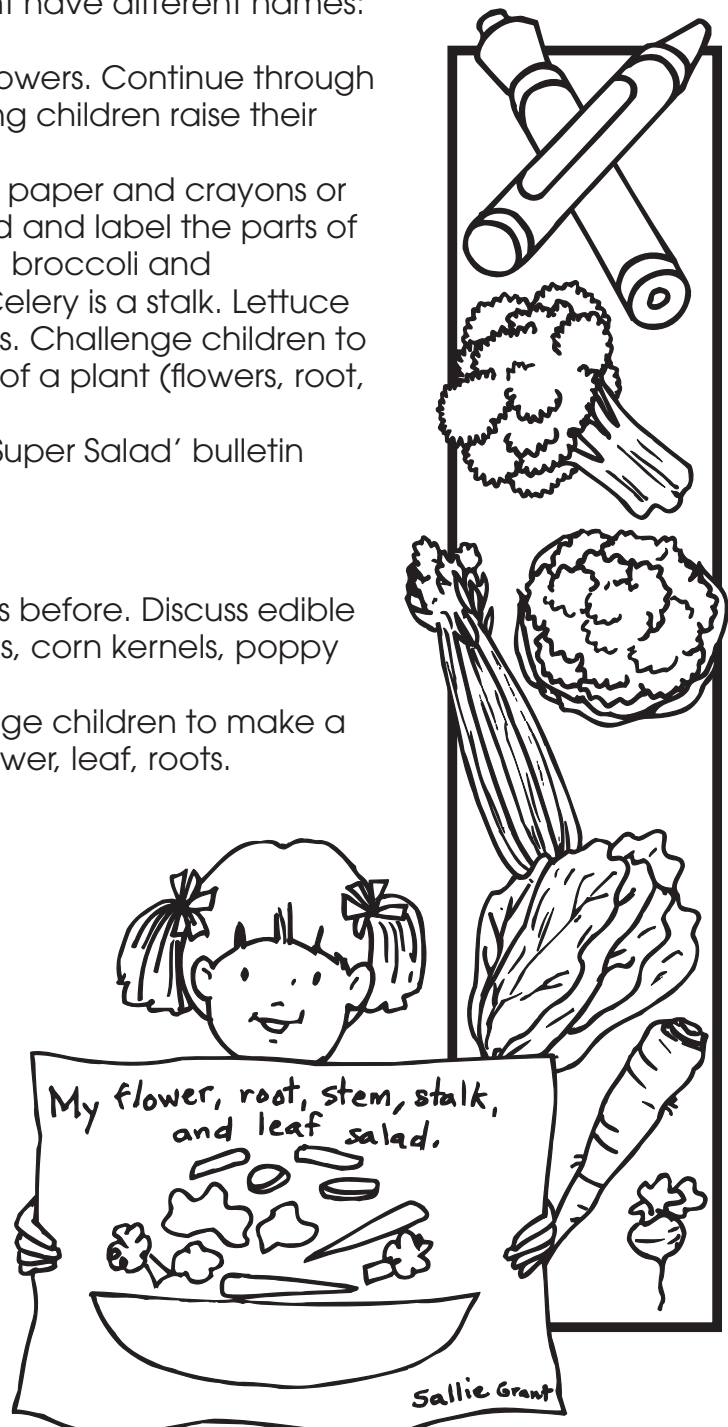
1. Explain that different parts of a plant have different names: leaves, stalks, flowers, roots and so on.
2. Ask children if they've ever eaten flowers. Continue through the rest of the parts of the plant, having children raise their hands if they've eaten each part.
3. Give each child a sheet of drawing paper and crayons or textas. Have the children draw a salad and label the parts of the plants that are used. For example, broccoli and cauliflower are the flowers of plants. Celery is a stalk. Lettuce is a leaf. Carrots and radishes are roots. Challenge children to draw salads that contain all the parts of a plant (flowers, root, stem or stalk and leaf).
4. Post the completed pictures on a 'Super Salad' bulletin board.

## Options:

- Ask if any children have eaten seeds before. Discuss edible seeds: sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, corn kernels, poppy seeds and so on.
- Bring in real vegetables and challenge children to make a salad with all parts of a plant: stalk, flower, leaf, roots.

## Storybook Link:

*Oliver's Vegetables* by Vivian French



# Glow Plants

Some plants give off light. They glow in the daytime and at night, but they're only visible in the dark. Glowing plants shine with a green light, orange light or yellow light. Many mushrooms glow. And many plants that live at the bottom of the ocean glow, too.

## Materials:

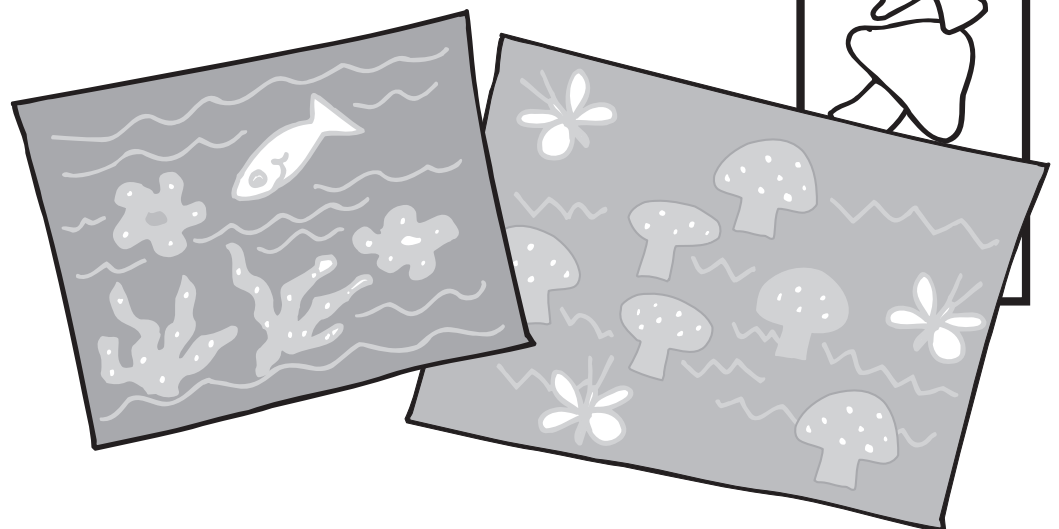
Black or blue construction paper, hole punch, clear cellophane (yellow, green and orange), tape or glue, light-coloured crayons

## Directions:

1. Give each child a sheet of coloured construction paper.
2. Have the children colour the paper using light-coloured crayons. They can draw mushrooms or they can use their imaginations to draw the types of plants that grow under water.
3. Provide hole punches for children to use to punch holes in their plants and mushrooms.
4. Provide different colours of clear cellophane for children to glue or tape to the backs of their pictures.
5. Tape the pictures on a window that gets plenty of sunlight.
6. Turn out the lights in the classroom and close the curtains except for the parts of the windows that have the pictures on them.
7. Have children observe their glowing plants.

## Fun Fact:

Some people call plants' light 'foxfire'.



## Concerning Cacti

The saguaro (sa-WAH-ro) cactus is the largest cactus in the world. Sometimes it grows to be 30 m tall. The saguaro can bloom and grow fruit for years with almost no rain. Some saguaros drink so much that they burst!

### Materials:

'Crazy Cacti' Hands-on Handout (p. 11), paper, pencils, measuring cups, different-sized containers (bottles, milk cartons or cans)

### Directions:

1. Discuss the fact that saguaros can go for a long time without water. When there is water, they drink as much as they can.
2. Divide the children into groups of four or five. Duplicate the 'Crazy Cacti' Hands-on Handout for groups to observe.
3. Give each group a piece of paper, a pencil, a container and a set of measuring cups.
4. Have the groups guess how much water their container can hold.
5. Take the children outside and have them use the measuring cups to fill their containers. They should keep track of how much water it takes to fill the containers. If the children guess incorrectly, their containers will either overflow or be partly empty.
6. Have children record whether their guesses were close, correct or too much. Then have them empty the water from the containers. (Try to find plants that need water, so there will be little waste.)

### Note:

This can be a wet activity!

