

Incredible!

Plants WITH Personality!

Not all plants are wallflowers. In fact, these ones have interesting personalities and survival skills!

BY ERIN SILVER

TOUCH-ME-NOT BALSAM

WHERE IT'S FOUND:
Europe, Asia, and North America



When a touch-me-not balsam feels an insect, like a netted carpet moth larva, eating its pods, the pods explode. This sends the insect flying! This is the balsam's way of making sure it doesn't become an all-you-can-eat buffet. In the process, it spreads its seeds so more balsams can grow.

PASSION FLOWER

WHERE IT'S FOUND:
The United States, Mexico, and Central and South America



This plant's speckled leaves fool butterflies into thinking that it's covered in eggs. When a butterfly comes by looking for a place to lay its own eggs, it sees these specks and thinks it's already full. Then it moves on.

This is a win for the passion flower, which avoids being eaten by the caterpillars that will one day emerge from those butterfly eggs.

PITCHER PLANT

WHERE IT'S FOUND:
North America



A pitcher plant lures insects it wants to eat with its inviting smell. But once a bug lands on it, the insect doesn't stand a chance. The pitcher plant's petals are slick, making it a steep slide to the bottom. Some pitcher plants even have special downward-pointing hairs to prevent bugs from escaping. Once an insect lands in the pitcher's digestive juices, it becomes plant food.

EUROPEAN HOLLY

WHERE IT'S FOUND:
Western and southern Europe, northwest Africa, and southwest Asia



European holly looks inviting with its green leaves and red berries, but don't be fooled! Its leaves are like weapons—with edges that are tough and sharp to protect it from grazing animals like cows and sheep. It's also been recently discovered that they are mini lightning conductors! Unlike other plants, the holly absorbs the electric current if it gets hit by lightning.

ILLUSTRATION: ALEX CHEN CONSULTANTS: DAVID ENSING, AGRICULTURE AND AGRIFOOD CANADA; HEATHER MCFARLANE, DEPARTMENT OF CELL AND SYSTEMS BIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO