



Weird and Wonderful

PLANTS





An imprint of The Energy and Resources Institute

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First published in 2011 by
The Energy and Resources Institute
TERI Press
Darbari Seth Block, IHC Complex, Lodhi Road,
New Delhi 110 003, India
Tel. 2468 2100/4150 4900, Fax: 2468 2144/2468 2145
India +91 ■ Delhi (0)11
Email: teripress@teri.res.in ■ Website: <http://bookstore.teriin.org>

ISBN 978-81-7993-251-3

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Author: Tanya Luther Agarwal
Managing Editor: Anupama Jauhry
Series Editor: Arshi Ahmad
Technical Review: Dr Nandini Kumar
Creative Head: Priyabrata Roy Chowdhury
Design: Santosh Gautam
Illustrations: Yatindra Kumar, Neeraj Riddlan, Vijay Nipane
Image Research: Yukti Garg
Production Head: T Radhakrishnan

Photo credits: Lithops (pages 6–7): Fernando Arias
(www.musicandpics.com)
Resurrection fern (pages 18-19): M Williams

Printed and bound in India

This book is printed on recycled paper.

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The Energy and Resources Institute

A note from Dr R K Pachauri

'Quirky' is possibly the word farthest from our minds when we think of nature. But it is a fact that underneath the beauty lies a side of nature that is completely out of the ordinary. Not many of us are aware of this facet, but once it is introduced to us, we cannot help but be amazed.

This series focuses on the most remarkable, yet little-known wonders of the natural world. From the tiniest to the world's biggest and heaviest flower; a fruit that looks like a hand; a desert full of salt; carpenter bees and tailor birds; from smoking hills to ringing rocks—these are indeed the most peculiar among animals, fruits, flowers, and natural phenomena.

By introducing children to the oddest and strangest, these books are sure to imbibe in them an inquisitiveness to learn more about nature. At a time and age when our future generations are at risk of getting more and more cut off from the world around them, this series will rekindle their interest by focusing on the unusual. I hope these pages will also instil in young minds a sense of responsibility to care for the environment that has so much surprise in store.



R K Pachauri
Director-General, TERI
Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

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Gopycats

Lithops

They look like stones or pebbles for sure, but when they begin to flower, you are left completely confused. The amazing 'living stones' are actually plants called lithops. These plants grow among stones and look just like them. A major part of this plant grows underground in very dry places.

Lithops are also known as pebble plants.



Above the ground **grow** two round leaves specially designed by nature to store water. These leaves are so short that they look like pebbles.

Lithops' stony look keeps hungry and thirsty birds away. When these plants bloom, they open up as **pretty white or yellow daisy-like flowers!**



There are more than thirty varieties of lithops in the world. The stone-like plants are found in beautiful colours like brown, grey, green, and even pink!





Hang in there!

Air plants



Believe it or not, **air plants** actually live in the air.

They **grow** above the ground **without any soil or mud**. All they need is something to **hang on to—objects, trees or rocks—for support**. They are called **epiphytes or air plants**.

The word 'epiphyte' comes from Greek; 'epi' means 'upon' and 'phyton' means 'plant'.



Air plants are unique. Their roots do not give them their food and water but only hold them up. The long and hard leaves of these plants absorb water and food they need from the air. These plants can survive a long time without direct sunlight and water. An air plant grows stunning and colourful flowers, but only once in its lifetime.



Baby air plants that grow out from the main plant, like tillandsias, are called pups!





Marry me!

Lichens (li-ke-enz)

When algae meet fungi, something interesting happens.

Lichens are formed! Algae are **green plants** that make their **own food**, and **fungi** get food from the algae. Fungi are non-green plants that protect the algae from harsh weather conditions. **Together, they support each other and make fascinating partners.**

From hot desert sands to cold Antarctic rocks, lichens are found just about **everywhere on the earth.**

Lichens are also used in making certain medicines and perfumes.



Weird and Wonderful : Plants



Publisher : TERI Press

ISBN : 9788179932513

Author : Tanya Luther
Agarwal

Type the URL : <http://www.kopykitab.com/product/8473>



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