

Botanists find world's ugliest orchid

21st December, 2020



Many people believe orchids to be the epitome of beauty. The colourful, delicate and fragrant blooms of an orchid will be the centrepiece of any floral display. However, botanists have just decided on the world's ugliest orchid. The orchid family comprises more

than 25,000 individual species, so there is every likelihood that one or two might not exude exquisiteness. A newly discovered variety has been awarded the label of the world's ugliest orchid by botanists at the Royal Botanic Gardens in the UK. It was found last year in a forest in Madagascar. One saving grace for the newly-unearthed plant is its smell. The scientists say the flower has a beautiful, musky, rose-like fragrance.

The 'ugly' orchid has been named "gastrodia agnicellus". Researcher Johan Hermans said: "It's not very attractive, I must say. It's fleshy looking, red inside and brown on the outside." However, scientists are excited at finding the plant because they believe there could be many more lurking in the undergrowth yet to be discovered. The bad news for the gastrodia is that even though it has just turned up, it is already considered to be an endangered species. Researcher Martin Cheek warned: "The bleak reality facing us cannot be underplayed. With two in five plants threatened with extinction, it is a race against time to find, identify, name, and conserve plants before they disappear."

Sources: sciencealert.com / nerdist.cim / huffpost.com /

Writing

It is more important to conserve plants than animals. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

orchids / beauty / blooms / floral / display / variety / botanists / gardens / fragrance / researcher / attractive / plant / discovery / endangered / species / reality / extinction

True / False

- a) The article says orchids are the world's most beautiful flowers. T / F
- b) There are over 25,000 kinds of orchids. T / F
- c) The new species of orchid was found in a Madagascan forest. T / F
- d) The newly-discovered orchid has a musty smell. T / F
- e) The new orchid is brown on the inside and red on the outside. T / F
- f) Scientists believe there may be more orchids waiting to be found. T / F
- g) The new orchid has already been put on the endangered species list. T / F
- h) A researcher says there is a race against time to conserve plants. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. epitome | a. thought |
| 2. fragrant | b. beauty |
| 3. comprises | c. protect |
| 4. exquisiteness | d. thrilled |
| 5. unearthed | e. sweet-smelling |
| 6. excited | f. hiding |
| 7. lurking | g. essence |
| 8. considered | h. gloomy |
| 9. bleak | i. discovered |
| 10. conserve | j. is made up of |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about orchids?
- b) What are your favourite flowers?
- c) How can a flower be ugly?
- d) Why do people like flowers so much?
- e) Have you ever received or given flowers?
- f) What does a botanist do every day?
- g) What flowers have the best smell?
- h) How good are you at growing flowers and plants?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Many people believe orchids to be the epitome | a. individual species |
| 2. The colourful, delicate and fragrant blooms of | b. time |
| 3. the centrepiece of any floral | c. grace |
| 4. The orchid family comprises more than 25,000 | d. species |
| 5. One saving | e. an orchid |
| 6. many more lurking in | f. disappear |
| 7. considered to be an endangered | g. the undergrowth |
| 8. The bleak reality | h. of beauty |
| 9. it is a race against | i. facing us |
| 10. conserve plants before they | j. display |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How worried are you about the extinction of plants?
- Would you like a job where you search forests for new species?
- How sad is it that plants are disappearing?
- What are the consequences for us of plants becoming extinct?
- What three adjectives best describe this story, and why?
- How can the world win the race against time?
- What questions would you like to ask the botanists?

Spelling

- believe orchids to be the pitomoe of beauty
- delicate and afgrnant blooms
- the centrepiece of any lfroal display
- The orchid family opcirmses more than 25,000
- one or two might not dxuee exquisiteness
- One saving cegra
- It's lesfhy looking
- likurng in the undergrowth
- an endangered escpeis
- The kbale reality
- threatened with xtnetciion
- ncesorve plants before they disappear

Answers – Synonym Match

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. g | 2. e | 3. j | 4. b | 5. i |
| 6. d | 7. f | 8. a | 9. h | 10. c |

Role Play

Role A – Orchids

You think orchids are the best flowers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their flowers. Also, tell the others which is the least lovely of these (and why): sunflowers, lotus flowers or roses.

Role B – Sunflowers

You think sunflowers are the best flowers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their flowers. Also, tell the others which is the least lovely of these (and why): orchids, lotus flowers or roses.

Role C – Lotus Flowers

You think lotus flowers are the best flowers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their flowers. Also, tell the others which is the least lovely of these (and why): sunflowers, orchids or roses.

Role D – Roses

You think roses are the best flowers. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their flowers. Also, tell the others which is the least lovely of these (and why): sunflowers, lotus flowers or orchids.

Speaking – Flowers

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| • Lilies | • Orchids |
| • Daffodils | • Sunflowers |
| • Daisies | • Roses |
| • Carnations | • Lotus flowers |

Answers – True False

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | F | b | T | c | T | d | F | e | F | f | T | g | T | h | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.