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Many orchids have resorted to tactics to entice pollinators offering flavors, shapes, colors and movements that mimic something that interested them without offering anything in return. The mechanisms of deception are as varied as surprising and are listed below:

generalized food deception: the flowers mimic the shape and color of the species that usually reward pollinators.

imitation of backup sites: flowers provide pollinators shelter sites. This strategy may not be misleading, but favorable for both the insect and orchid.

pseudoantagonismo: the plant attracts pollinators through the invocation of innate defense mechanisms. Thus, it mimics the form of another species of insect, for example, that the pollinator want out, or kill. The pollinator, to see his supposed enemy, attack him, again and again. Useless in this fight against a flower, the insect is covered with pollen to other flowers when distributed be fooled again.

attraction "rendezvous" mimic flowers to other flowers that are attractive to females of pollinators

sexual deception: in this case, the flowers mimic the mating signals (both visual and olfactory) of female pollinators.

Of the mechanisms described, the orchid is common in the general food deception (reported in 38 genera) followed by sexual deception (18 genera).

Attracting pollinators by deception for food

The ability to attract pollinators without offering any reward has evolved independently in several lineages of angiosperms, but usually in only a few species per family. In contrast, it is estimated that about one third of orchid species use the mechanism of food deception. This mechanism consists in attracting pollinators by signaling the presence of food such as nectar or pollen, but without providing any kind of reward. For this, use the strategy of orchids look like if species reward their pollinators and which live together. More often, the food deception is a general resemblance to the species that reward pollinators, ie this type of orchid has large flowers and bright colors, a strategy that exploits the innate preferences of pollinators for that kind of flowers.

In this case the orchid "tricks" typical pollinators of other plant species to carry out pollination. The trick is to imitate method for the flowers of other species. A very descriptive of this is seen in the orchid Epidendrum ibaguense . This terrestrial orchid or litofila abounds from Mexico to Bolivia and Brazil . Its orange flowers with deep yellow lip mimic the flowers of a ASCLEPIADACEAE , Asclepias curassavica . There is a butterfly, Agraulis vanillae , usually visiting this species to procure nectar in exchange for the transport of pollen. Many times, however, the butterfly attracted to the color and shape of the flowers of Epidendrum is directed towards them and introduces its mouthparts (the proboscis) in a narrow channel (ginostemo) which, by their very small diameter, determines the proboscis trapped briefly. The struggle to free the insect makes the orchid pollinia to stick to your head. After letting go, and being deceived again by another plant of Epidendrum , transport and permit pollen pollination in this species but without receiving nectar for their services.

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