

Those seductive scents of spring are here again: alluring pink jasmine, beckoning rose bouquets, languishing lupines, spunky carnations, and sexy sweet-shade trees are just a few of our garden's aromatic and colorful players. How delightful that these botanical wonders have been divinely created for our sensual enjoyment ... or have they? Perhaps by design, our naked eye cannot detect the savage sexual interludes occurring in our very own gardens ... even in public gardens!

Microscopic molestations are afoot in our favorite flowers. A must for any gardener's coffee table is Alice Ovary's hilarious book *Sex in your Garden*. Ovary writes with wanton and reckless abandon, describing how the hibiscus flower is like a red dress to the hummingbird, eloquently illustrating how a plant species' perky flower pistil unscrupulously maneuvers to get its pollen placed upon an enticing stigmatic surface for pollination.

Quite trite, plants are largely un-aroused as to what humans consider *colorful*; colors have a design intention of their own. Although our species has mastered the art of horticultural plant breeding and manipulation, millions of years of plant evolution have proceeded without our help. Flower color and aromatic frequencies allure the pollinator to engage in their sexual favors.

Evolutionarily speaking, nature appears to be moving toward increasing cooperative complexity through interdependence: plants rely on animals for reproductive assistance. Attractive flowers and fruit colors, along with engaging scents, lure the animal in a deceptive tactic toward strategic sexual dissemination. The reward for this mesmerized animal doing a plant's dirty work may be nectar, fruit, or pollen. Angiosperms (fruit-covered seeds), have an intimate relationship with birds, insects, and other animals to assist in their sexual success.

Ancient ferns and *gymnosperms* (literally, "naked seeds," like cones), however, could rely solely on wind to disseminate pollen from a male to female. In fact, as many hay-fever victims will attest, nature still uses the wind to spread the sexual pollen of *many* plants and trees by the droves: wispy grasses, hill-studded oaks, river-bound willows, and sycamores are a few of the largest pollen wind-riders that afflict the immune system as allergens. A humorous allergy anecdote from Ovary's book, Thomas Leo Ogren's "*Safe Sex in the Garden*," will offer many allergy-friendly plants for pollen-sensitive gardeners to continue to exercise their green thumb.

Insects can reportedly put on quite a familiar show to attract members of the opposite sex; rubbing, strumming, or bowing their leg-hairs together to play a romantic song on a



THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

leaf. How about macho shows of fighting off other males or mate-guarding the females of their species after intercourse? Additionally, some orchid flower mimicry can fool a bee into copulation with a perceived partner, yet really doing the pollination work for the plant. Wicked predatory wasps may inject their ovipositor in aphids or on caterpillars for their larvae's first, juicy, coniferous bite into their new world. Most shocking of all, can you believe all of these dirty acts may very well be happening in your own tidy little garden?

Spring is here, so rejoice in the floral affair by expressing all of your deepest plant passions and get in touch with your garden.

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