

How trap-flowers attract and deceive pollinating food thieves

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Researchers have discovered a new pollination system that involves food-thieving flies as pollinators. These flies feed on insect secretions, available when a spider, a praying mantis, or other predatory arthropods feed on insects. The plant mimics compounds released from freshly killed insects to deceive flies that are in search of food.

This pollination strategy applies to *Aristolochia rotunda*—an herbaceous Mediterranean plant—but likely evolved in other plants as well.

"The finding was unexpected as *Aristolochia* species were believed to mimic egg-laying sites of fly [pollinators](#). Only an international team and a [multidisciplinary approach](#) allowed uncovering this intriguing pollination system," said biologist Birgit Oelschlägel, lead author of the *New Phytologist* study.

More information: Oelschlägel, B., Nuss, M., von Tschirnhaus, M., Pätzold, C., Neinhuis, C., Dötterl, S. and Wanke, S. (2014), The betrayed thief - the extraordinary strategy of *Aristolochia rotunda* to deceive its pollinators. *New Phytologist*. [DOI: 10.1111/nph.13210](https://doi.org/10.1111/nph.13210)

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