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Blurb

Australia is a land of floral wonder. With around 24,000 native plant species, 90 per cent of them are unique to our island home. They are also some of the most ancient and fierce varieties on Earth, cleverly adapting, over millions of years, to drastic changes in climate and landscapes.

From microscopic ferns to the mighty mountain ash, this beautifully illustrated book is a garden of curious, colourful and occasionally deadly plant life. Wander through Australia's botanical heritage—and discover the vital role our flora plays in the future of our planet.

About the Creator

Tania McCartney is an author, illustrator and editor with over 30 years of experience in publishing. She has many titles to her name, including *Fauna: Australia's Most Curious Creatures*, *I Heart the World*, *Mamie, Merry Everything* and *Australia: An Illustrated Map*. Tania is a passionate advocate for increasing children's literacy and is the founder of Kids Book Review and was an ambassador for the National Year of Reading 2012. Tania has received many awards and commendations for individual publications, but also for her broader contribution to the sector, including the Laurie Copping Award for Distinguished Service to Children's Literature (CBCA ACT) in 2017.

Flora: Australia's Most Curious Plants

Teachers' Notes

Recommended for: Grades 3–6

Australian Curriculum Links

Subjects:

Science

Visual Arts

Cross Curriculum Priorities:

Sustainability

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Spelling Words

1. Algae
2. Antioxidant
3. Bacteria
4. Classification
5. Conservation
6. Germination
7. Hybrid
8. Organism
9. Pollinator
10. Spore

Endangered Plants

Throughout the book, the illustrations of flora include their conservation status. Have the students examine the key on page 5 and find flora in the book that are critically endangered (CR) or endangered (EN). Discuss with the class why these plants might be endangered and think of ways to preserve them for the next 100 years.

Climate Zones

Native flora grows all around Australia in different climate zones. Pages 6 and 7 illustrate these different climate zones and landscapes. Give each student a random native flora and climate zone and ask them to research whether the plant could survive in that climate zone. Ask them to elaborate why it could survive or not.

Building Materials

Australian native animals use native flora for food, protection and nesting materials. The koala on page 13 both eats the leaves and sleeps amongst the branches of the eucalyptus tree. In groups, the students can research how different Australian animals use native flora to create nests. Examples could be the satin bowerbird, platypus, sliver gull and metallic starling. As a class, discuss the materials used and the shapes they create.

Fires, Drought, and Floods

Australia can have extreme weather changes and the flora has different ways of responding to change. Page 13 shows how some types of gumnuts need fire to be able to release seeds. Create a classroom wall chart listing the flora that can survive extreme weather conditions and how they do this.

Pollinators

Many plants rely on animals and insect to spread pollen and seeds. Page 17 has an illustration of a Christmas beetle which is a native Australian pollinator. Ask students to research an Australian mammal, insect or bird which pollinates. They could write or draw how the pollinator assists the life cycle of flora.

Deadly Flora

Not every plant in Australia is safe to eat or even touch. Pages 30 and 31 list just some of the deadliest. Discuss with the class what plants they know are dangerous and why these plants may have adapted to be dangerous. Students could create warning posters for deadly Australian flora, with tips for staying safe.



Bush Food

Australian flora is not just vibrant and diverse, it can be edible. Pages 36 and 37 have a plate of food to explore. First Australians have been harvesting native plants for thousands of years and have their own way of identifying seasonal changes. Go to CSIRO and pick an First Australian seasonal calendar. Show the students and ask them to identify the differences and similarities with the Western four-season calendar.

Floral Emblems

Australia's national flora emblem is the golden wattle. Ask students to list where they have seen the golden wattle as a symbol or emblem. Examples might include bank notes, sports uniforms, or the coat of arms. Each state and territory in Australia has its own floral emblem, shown on page 38. Students could nominate a floral emblem for their school. They might then explain why they have chosen the new emblem and how it reflects the school.

Illustrations

Use Trove to find botanical illustrations of native flora. Ask students why Europeans would need to illustrate Australian flora when they first started exploring Australia. Students can choose their favourite flora and create their own botanical illustration. They may focus on the colour and shape, or on the different parts of the plant.

