

Nat Theo Club

FIELD NOTES

ISSUE #61



Sensitive Plant

PERENNIAL PLANT (LIVES 3-5 YEARS)

HABITAT

This plant is native to the tropics of Central and South America but has also spread to the southern United States. It prefers direct sunlight and is found in fields and forest edges.

FUN FACT

This plant has a special symbiotic partnership with bacteria. Nitrogen is captured from the air so that the plant can grow in poor soil conditions. The bacteria, in turn, receives sugars created by the plant by photosynthesis.



With permission, scan this QR code to see a sensitive plant close.

HAVE YOU SEEN A PLANT MOVE QUICKLY?

While studying natural resources in college, I often passed through a small 17-acre nature preserve to get to class. I loved seeing bluebell wildflowers every spring and experiencing the stillness of the forest on my way to a busy school day. I signed up for naturalist training to lead school groups through the woods. Since the onsite greenhouse was part of the tour, I was introduced to an interesting tropical plant. The sensitive plant was appropriately named for the way it responded to touch. When I touched the leaves with my finger, they would close.

This tropical plant was new to me, and I knew it would be the highlight of my tours, so I always ended with a visit to the greenhouse. I later found out how and why this plant was designed to move. The sensitive plant has specialized "pulvini" cells that cause water to move quickly from one area to another. The loss of water pressure causes the plant to fold and droop. Touch-sensitive plants are called "thigmonastic."

Thigmo=touch sensitive

Nastic=non-directional movement

The slightest brush of my finger or a creature causes the plant's leaves to close. This can help protect the plant from being eaten by the creature. After 15-30 minutes, the leaves open back up to capture light.

What do you think it means to be sensitive to God? Has God ever asked you to do anything? When we read the Bible with a sensitive heart, God can use His words to teach and train us. Also, when we encounter someone hurting, being sensitive to God may prompt us to respond in love. Proverbs 2:2 encourages us to turn our ears to wisdom and our hearts to understanding. When you are sensitive and listen to God, you learn His ways, and you are rewarded with wisdom and understanding.

