

STAPELIA HIRSUTA.



CHARACTER GENERICUS.

Corolla contorta.

Nectarium stellula duplex in medio corollæ.

Pentandria Digynia.

CHARACTER SPECIFICUS, &c.

STAPELIA denticulis ramorum erectis.

Lin. Spec. Plantar. p. 316.

ASCLEPIAS AFRICANA AIZOIDES, flore
pulchre fimbriato.

Comm. rar. 19. t. 19.

Inter pretiosissimas plantarum dotes merito numeratur odor ille gratissimus quem plurimæ emittunt, quo in colligendo, conservando, augendo, subtiliter studioseque semper laboratum est. Suave-olentium vegetabilium tanta sane est diversitas, ut odores speciatim recensere vix possibile sit. Ut taceam rosam, violam, dianthum, cæteramque copiam narium in hortis plerisque repertam, genera Diosmæ, Illicii, Nyctanthes, et Polyanthes, velut exempla suavissimæ et pollentissimæ fragrantiae satis sit proferre.

Huic aromaticorum ubertati opponuntur exempla aliquot contrarii odoris in generibus Ari, Sterculiæ, Lobeliæ, cæterisque nonnullis; rara hæc quidem, quæ tamen satis probant Naturam in humani generis oblectatione

lectatione non semper versari. Phalli species, in sylvis, exeunte æstate, non raro conspecta, odorem quasi carnis putridæ spargendo, insecta multa carnivora, muscas præcipue vulgares, seu carnarias ad se allicit, quæ in summitate plantæ catervatim conglomerantur, liquorem glutinosum exinde copiose effluentem avidissime exuentes.

Omnes autem hætenus cognitæ, quæ more mortui cadaveris fætere solent, planta illa in tabula depicta longe superat; cui tanta est odoris putridi graveolentia, ut e longinquo veniant muscæ vulgares seu carnariæ LINNÆI, ovaque ibi deponant; quibus exclusis, larvæ parvo tempore plerumque pereunt; qua in re unica seipsam decipere, suæque quasi frustrare consilia videatur Natura. Interdum tamen, si qua fides observatoribus, accidit ut aliæ muscarum species, carnaria multo minores, in eodem flore ova sua deponant, larvæque exclusæ, ob exiguitatem parvo cibo egentes, florem ipsum depascant; ad plenam magnitudinem perveniant, et in chrysalides convertantur, ex quibus muscæ perfectæ postea erumpunt. Ita se rem habere demonstrat experimentum a domino HILL memoratum, qui narrat larvas plurimas muscarum, hoc solo flore enutritas, omnibus vicibus et permutationibus absolutis, ad plenam et perfectam maturitatem adolevisse.

Africæ est indigena hæc planta, et in promontorio bonæ spei præcipue invenitur.



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FETID STAPELIA,
OR THE
CARRION-FLOWER.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

Corolla slightly twisted towards one side.

Nectary in form of a double star in the middle of the corolla.

Pentandria Digynia.

SPECIFIC CHARACTER, &c.

STAPELIA with the denticles of the branches upright.

THE CARRION-FLOWER.

The fragrance emitted by the major part of the vegetable world is such as to be regarded amongst the most elegant and valuable attributes of plants; and the ingenuity of mankind has been studiously employed in collecting, preserving, and concentrating it. So great is the variety of vegetable perfumes that it is hardly possible to enumerate the different kinds. Without particularizing the rose, the violet, the carnation, and many other common inhabitants of the garden, we might adduce the genera of *Diosma*, *Illium*, *Nyctanthes*, *Polyanthes*, and some others, as peculiar

peculiar examples of the richest and most exalted fragrance.

Amidst this profusion of sweets in the vegetable kingdom there are occasionally interspersed some examples of a contrary odor: thus some species in the genera of *Arum*, *Sterculia*, *Lobelia*, and a few others, are convincing proofs that Nature does not always accommodate her productions to the immediate gratification of the human sense.

A species of *Morell*, not uncommon in woods towards the latter part of the summer, has a smell so much resembling that of putrid animal matter, as to attract several species of carnivorous insects, and particularly flies, which are generally observed settled in great numbers on the top of the plant, and eagerly feasting on the glutinous moisture with which it abounds.

But of all vegetables yet known, which are possessed of a smell similar to that of animal substances, the plant here figured is by far the most remarkable; and when in a state of florescence, diffuses a scent so powerfully cadaverous as to allure the common flesh-fly, or blow-fly to deposit its eggs on the flower, where they are hatched, and the young larvæ, for want of proper nutriment, commonly perish soon afterwards; and thus Nature in this single instance, almost seems to have deceived herself. If however we may rely on some observations, it happens sometimes that other species of flies much smaller than the common flesh-fly, deposit their eggs in the flower, and when hatched, the larvæ being very small, and not requiring much food,
do

do actually find a sufficient nutriment from the flower itself, till the time of their change to chrysalis arrives; and after the usual period become complete flies; and this appears to have been the case in an instance recorded by the late Sir JOHN HILL, where several larvæ of flies are said to have passed through all their changes, though nourished solely by the flower of this plant.

It is a native of Africa, and is principally found at the Cape of Good Hope.



Shaw, George. 1791. "Fetid Stapelia or the Carrion - Flower, *Stapelia hirsuta* [Pl. 54]." *The Naturalist's Miscellany* 2(XIX), <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.310706>.

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