



Smithsonian Gardens

Preview of Nature's Jewels Exhibition

Biological diversity, the dazzling variety of life in all its forms, levels, and combinations, is expressed exuberantly in the world of orchids. In that colorful universe, plants and animals have evolved to depend closely on each other for their very survival.

The vast diversity of orchids — as many as 20,000 species world-wide, with a stunning range of colors, shapes, sizes, and strategies for living — is largely due to their adaptability. Orchids have adapted to grow in almost every habitat on the planet.

Another reason for orchids' diversity is their often-intricate relationships with their pollinators — mainly flying animals, including birds, butterflies, bees and other flying insects. Some of the most extravagant and exotic blooms are elaborate lures for attracting specific pollinator species. Orchids growing in remote areas and in densely forested areas rely on these specific relationships to reproduce.

