STRANGER PLANTS

ASTRAL CREEPER
Mandevilla toxicus

The astral creeper thrives on fiery planets where extreme heat and radiation destroy all other plant life. Astrobotanists trace its lineage to Earth's tropical climbing *Mandevilla* species.

FACT FILE: This fast growing vining plant is an evolutionary wonder that is able to overtake an entire planet within weeks. Its thick storage roots act as reservoirs to store water during planetary droughts or stellar heatwaves. All parts of the plant emit a toxic sap that will cause any that touch or ingest it to disintegrate upon contact. With no native pollinators, the glowing trumpet-shaped blooms serve to lure alien pollinators from far off galaxies.

STRANGER PLANTS

BLUE PHANTOM

Hyacintropa parasitica

The blue phantom is a parasitic plant that thrives in the shady undergrowth of its home planet. Astrobotanists believe it evolved as a hybrid of the Earth species *Hyacinthoides* (blue bell) and *Monotropa uniflora* (ghost pipe).

FACT FILE: This ghostly-white vine produces distinct blue bell-shaped flowers and a glowing fruit. The phantom's fruit is toxic to most species except to those that disperse their seeds. This plant lacks chlorophyll and the ability to photosynthesize and instead relies on parasitism to gather the nutrients it needs for survival. Its long roots steal nutrients from its host by tapping into the underground networks between plants and fungi.

STRANGER PLANTS

NOVA BLOOM

Lithopsica colossalis

The nova bloom thrives in cold arid environments and is a master of camouflage on its orange rocky desert planet. Astrobotanists believe it evolved from the Earth plant *Lithops spp.* (living stone).

FACT FILE: This hardy plant is adapted to freezing temperatures and uses its crystallized taproot to pierce through the permafrost to reach reservoirs of water deep beneath the surface. Its thick, fleshy stem is uniquely adapted to store liquid water and has special antifreeze proteins to prevent freezing during long periods of subzero temperatures. Most of the plant grows below ground so it can withstand the intense cold and dry conditions. The colorful flowers glow gently at night to attract nocturnal pollinators.

STRANGER PLANTS

FLOTUS PUFFWORT

Centumbo podulata

The flotus puffwort thrives on flood-prone planets where heavy rains and vast oceans dominate the landscape. Astrobotanists believe it descends from a hybrid of the Earth species *Centaurea spp.* (cornflower) and *Nelumbo spp.* (lotus).

FACT FILE: The large, glowing, blue-fringed flowers of the flotus puffwort attract nocturnal pollinators. Once pollinated, this plant produces buoyant blue seeds. As the seed pod dries, the seeds drop into nearby bodies of water and float until they reach shallow ground and take root. The puffwort's large orange leaves are **hydrophobic** meaning they repel water to prevent rot in their aquatic environments.

FLAMELA
Banksilla pyraflora

The flamela flower inhabits arid, fire-scorched planets. Astrobotanists have traced its lineage to Earth's *Banksia spp.*, though it has adapted far beyond its terrestrial relatives.

FACT FILE: Like its Earth ancestor, flamela is **serotinous** meaning the seed pods remain sealed until fire triggers their release. During solar flare events, the flower heads ignite in brilliant bursts of flame, exposing seed pods hidden deep within. The heat-triggered seed pods burst open, dispersing their seeds into the nutrient-rich, radioactive soils left behind by recent fire activity. The seeds germinate instantly and the plant is easily able to outcompete other species and dominate the burned landscape.

PLUMORA

Cortapteris pampans

A resilient plant, plumora is adapted to a variety of environmental conditions and can withstand drought, extreme heat, and high winds. Astrobotanists believe this plant is most closely related to the Earth species *Cortaderia spp.* (pampas grass).

FACT FILE: Plumora grows rapidly – up to six feet in a single day. Its towering, hollow stems have thick bark that locks in moisture and protects the plant from harsh winds and intense sunlight. Specialized leaves of vibrant pink plumes provide shade and cool the plant during heat waves. At night, the plumes glow softly to signal the release of millions of microscopic spores. These lightweight spores travel great distances and allow plumora to spread rapidly across its host planet.

STRANGER PLANTS

GOLDEN SUNSTAR

Helianthes goldii

The golden sunstar can be found rooted in black soil at the bases of long-dormant volcanic craters. Astrobotanists believe that it evolved from the Earth species *Helianthus annuus*, the common sunflower.

FACT FILE: This plant's large orange-glowing center is not a true flower but a specialized photosynthetic organ. It captures light and stores it as thermal energy, radiating heat during frigid nights. The yellow, flame-like petals are wax-coated to lock in moisture and protect against volcanic gases. Like its sunflower ancestor, the Golden Sunstar displays **heliotropism** meaning its crown slowly turns to follow the path of the nearest star.

STRANGER PLANTS

DOOM FLOWER

Stapestemon putridus

The doom flower thrives on sulfuric plains in the shadowed craters of dead planets. Astrobotanists believe it descends from Earth's *Stapelia* species (carrion plant).

FACT FILE: The doom flower blooms once every thousand years, producing a large red and blue flower that resembles rotting flesh in color and smell. The putrid aroma attracts alien scavengers in search of their next meal. This plant however has also adapted carnivorous strategies and instead of finding a meal, the plant's visitors become one. Once the plant has gathered enough nutrients, the flower wilts. The plant will persist underground for hundreds of years, covered in sulfur ash and rock, reblooming only when enough decaying matter has enriched the surrounding soil.

STRANGER PLANTS

LUMINSPIRE VINE

Hamamandra curlescens

The luminspire vine thrives on icy, wind-swept planets where only the hardiest flora can survive. Astrobotanists believe it is a hybrid between two Earth species – *Trachyandra tortilis* (medusa's hair) and *Hamamelis spp.* (witch hazel).

FACT FILE: This vining plant is highly toxic and produces a rainbow of vibrantly colored flowers act as a warning to would be predators. The flower also serves to protect the seeds during cold snaps – uncurling to close around the seed pods. As the flowers wilt, the spring-loaded seed pods propel the plant's seeds incredible distances – sometimes far enough to reach new planets.