

## Parasitic plants

There are many organisms that live on or in another animal or plant. These organisms are known as parasites, and they include ticks and lice.

However, did you know that certain plants can also be parasites? They attach themselves to other plants and share their nutrients and water supply. Without the host plant, these parasitic plants would not survive.

Parasitic plants have a special stem or root called a haustorium, which allows them to connect with the vessels of the host.

### Examples of parasitic plants

#### Mistletoe

Mistletoe is a small shrub that grows in large balls at the tops of trees. It has oval-shaped, green leaves and white berries. It is a stem parasite, which means it attaches itself to the host plant's stem to share its nutrients and water. In the UK, mistletoe is usually found in deciduous trees such as apple, willow, poplar and rowan. Finding mistletoe growing in oak trees is rare.



#### Yellow rattle

Yellow rattle grows in wild flower meadows. It has yellow, tube-like flowers with jagged, green leaves. It is a root parasite, so it gets nutrients and water by attaching itself to the roots of the grasses around it. In the UK, it can be found across farmland and grassland.



#### Eyebright

Eyebright grows in short grassland. It has green, oval-shaped leaves that have sharp points, and white flowers that have purple veins and a yellow centre. Like yellow rattle, it is a root parasite, attaching itself to the roots of the grasses around it. In the UK, it can grow in moorlands and meadows.

