

Smelliest plant in the world blooms at Fairchild

Once-in-a-lifetime occasion for Miami tropical botanic garden's endangered corpse flower



MIAMI, Fla. – A rare plant bloomed on Tuesday at **Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden**. Affectionately known as “Mr. Stinky Junior,” it was the first time since 2006 that one of Fairchild’s Mr. Stinkies bloomed. A spokesperson says they never know when the (real name) Titan-Arum will bloom, so they keep an eye on the ones they have. And once the bloom appears, it has a limited shelf life as it wilts in only days.

Mr. Stinky certainly lives up to its name. The smell of its bloom is described as a stench like road kill or rotting meat, though everyone smells something different we’re told: stinky cheese, boiled cabbage, rotting fish, sweaty socks, according to information from The Huntington in San Marino, California, who also owns its own set of stinky flowers.

So why the smell? Dung beetles, flesh flies and other insects attracted to meat are the primary pollinators of the flower. They are insects which typically eat dead flesh. The smell and the dark burgundy color of the corpse flower are meant to imitate a dead animal to attract the insects to pollinate the flower.

But its rarity cannot be denied. Also known as the corpse flower (*Amorphophallus titanum*) because of its blooms short life span, there are fewer than 1,000 remaining in the wild, according to the **US Botanic Garden**.

It is listed as Endangered by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature** (IUCN), which estimates that the population has declined more than 50 percent over the past 150 years. Reasons for the decline are logging and the conversion of the plant's native forest habitat to oil palm plantations.

"A lot of people are beginning to take a second glance at the weirder parts of nature including plants like these because they are most vital just as people like orchids." David Hernandez, volunteer consultant at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, told Local 10 News videographer Jason Weitzman. Hernandez said there's a whole other chain of plants that are neglected. "They need to be protected." He says that bringing people in to Fairchild to see the stinky plants when they bloom helps make the public aware. "Things like this are what gets people get connected to what we do here."

In another rare feat of nature, another Stinky at Zoo Miami bloomed at the same time as Fairchild's plant. A spokesperson for Fairchild said that botanists were able to cross pollinate the plants in real time. It was a once-in-a-lifetime occasion, the spokesperson said.

They also say there is no way to capture or know when the Titan-Arum's flowers are going to bloom so they are constantly being watched.

While this Mr. Stinky has already wilted, there will be **other opportunities as Fairchild** as they are keeping an eye on their other corpse flowers.

Then go and decide for yourself what Mr. Stinky smells like.