



Solanum Plastisexum

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A team of scientists from the US and Australia has named a new plant species from the northern Australia as **Solanum Plastisexum**.

- First discovered in 1977, it is also known as the Dungowan bush tomato.
- For decades, the plant remained unnamed and no scientists could understand the functionality of the plant. The sex of its flowers kept changing every time it was studied.
- The species name 'Solanum Plastisexum' comes from the Greek root meaning 'moldable' or 'changeable' combined with the Latin word for sex.

Relevance

- While it's not unusual for flowers to be hermaphrodite, i.e. to bear both male and female reproductive parts, this unusual plant did not seem to fall in with the binary sexual norms of the plant kingdom.
- *S. plastisexum* is not just a model for the diversity of sexual/reproductive form seen among plants -- it is also evidence that attempts to recognize a "normative" sexual condition among the planet's living creatures is problematic
- When considering the scope of life on Earth, the notion of a constant sexual binary consisting of two distinct and disconnected forms is, fundamentally, a fallacy.
Living organisms, including plants and animals, often exhibit diverse sexual forms, such as an all-female lizard species whose eggs have all the genetic material needed to reproduce, and clown fish, which are born male and can transform into females later in life.