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In this investigation of orchids, first published in 1862, Darwin expands on a point made in *On the Origin of Species* that he felt required further explanation, namely that he believes it to be 'a universal law of nature that organic beings require an occasional cross with another individual'. Darwin explains the method by which orchids are fertilised by insects, and argues that the intricate structure of their flowers evolved to favour cross pollination because of its advantages to the species. The book is written in Darwin's usual precise and elegant style, accessible despite its intricate detail. It includes a brief explanation of botanical terms and is illustrated with 34 woodcuts.

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ISBN 978-1-108-02715-1



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