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**Level 5 – 10th August 2026**

## **Deadly flowers could help create new medicines**

**FREE online quizzes, mp3 listening and more for this lesson here:**

<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-5.html>

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**Please try Levels 4 and 6. They are (a little) harder.**

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# THE READING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-5.html>

The world is full of natural medicinal wonders, but some species of flowers can be deadly. They have been used for centuries to poison people. However, botanists in the USA and Czechia have discovered that two particularly poisonous plants could be used to make new medicines. The scientists conducted research on two flowers: wolfsbane and larkspur. Small amounts of wolfsbane could cause death from respiratory paralysis or heart failure. Larkspur can cause skeletal muscle weakness. "Biohacking" of the plants' chemical makeup could create valuable medicines.

The researchers recreated the toxic compounds from the two plants. A study co-author said: "Understanding how to create them can help provide totally new routes for testing." They could be used to reduce pain, to treat malaria and cancer, and to kill pests. A biochemist said: "Plants are the best chemists around, upgrading their arsenal of natural compounds over millions of years to help them survive." Another researcher said: "Many of the medicines we use today either come directly from plants or are inspired by plant chemistry."

Sources: <https://phys.org/news/2026-07-deadly-blooms-genetic-blueprint-hard.html>  
<https://www.earth.com/news/deadly-plants-could-inspire-a-new-generation-of-natural-medicines/>  
<https://bioengineer.org/two-deadly-flowers-show-major-medical-potential/>

# PHRASE MATCHING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-5.html>

## PARAGRAPH ONE:

- |                                     |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. The world is full of natural     | a. cause death       |
| 2. They have been used              | b. medicines         |
| 3. some species of flowers can      | c. for centuries     |
| 4. used to make new                 | d. chemical makeup   |
| 5. scientists conducted research    | e. medicinal wonders |
| 6. Small amounts of wolfsbane could | f. paralysis         |
| 7. respiratory                      | g. on two flowers    |
| 8. Biohacking of the plants'        | h. be deadly         |

## PARAGRAPH TWO:

- |                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. researchers recreated the  | a. of years           |
| 2. study                      | b. for testing        |
| 3. provide totally new routes | c. use today          |
| 4. They could be used to      | d. and cancer         |
| 5. to treat malaria           | e. toxic compounds    |
| 6. over millions              | f. reduce pain        |
| 7. Many of the medicines we   | g. by plant chemistry |
| 8. inspired                   | h. co-author          |

# LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-5.html>

The world is (1) \_\_\_\_\_ medicinal wonders, but some species of flowers can be deadly. They have been used for centuries (2) \_\_\_\_\_. However, botanists in the USA and Czechia have discovered (3) \_\_\_\_\_ poisonous plants could be used to make new medicines. The scientists (4) \_\_\_\_\_ two flowers: wolfsbane and larkspur. Small amounts of wolfsbane could cause death from respiratory paralysis (5) \_\_\_\_\_. Larkspur can cause skeletal muscle weakness. (6) \_\_\_\_\_ plants' chemical makeup could create valuable medicines.

The researchers recreated (7) \_\_\_\_\_ from the two plants. A study co-author said: "Understanding how to create them can help provide (8) \_\_\_\_\_ for testing." They could be used to reduce pain, (9) \_\_\_\_\_ and cancer, and to kill pests. A biochemist said: "Plants are the best chemists around, upgrading their arsenal (10) \_\_\_\_\_ over millions of years to help them survive." Another researcher said: "Many (11) \_\_\_\_\_ we use today either come directly from plants or (12) \_\_\_\_\_ plant chemistry."

# PUT A SLASH ( / ) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-5.html>

The world is full of natural medicinal wonders, but some species of flowers can be deadly. They have been used these for centuries to poison people. However, botanists in the USA and Czechia have discovered that two particularly poisonous plants could be used to make new medicines. The scientists conducted research on two flowers: wolfsbane and larkspur. Small amounts of wolfsbane could cause death from respiratory paralysis or heart failure. Larkspur can cause skeletal muscle weakness. "Biohacking" of the plants' chemical makeup could create valuable medicines. The researchers recreated the toxic compounds from the two plants. A study co-author said: "Understanding how to create them can help provide totally new routes for testing." They could be used to reduce pain, to treat malaria and cancer, and to kill pests. A biochemist said: "Plants are the best chemists around, upgrading their arsenal of natural compounds over millions of years to help them survive." Another researcher said: "Many of the medicines we use today either come directly from plants or are inspired by plant chemistry."

# TOXIC FLOWERS SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about toxic flowers in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.  
When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

|      | STUDENT 1<br>_____ | STUDENT 2<br>_____ | STUDENT 3<br>_____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.2. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.3. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.4. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.5. |                    |                    |                    |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_
- f) \_\_\_\_\_

*Deadly flowers could help create new medicines – 10th August 2026*  
More free lessons at [breakingnewsenglish.com](https://breakingnewsenglish.com)

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## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_
- f) \_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2608/260810-toxic-flowers-5.html>

Write about **toxic flowers** for 10 minutes. Read and talk about your partner's paper.

[illegible]