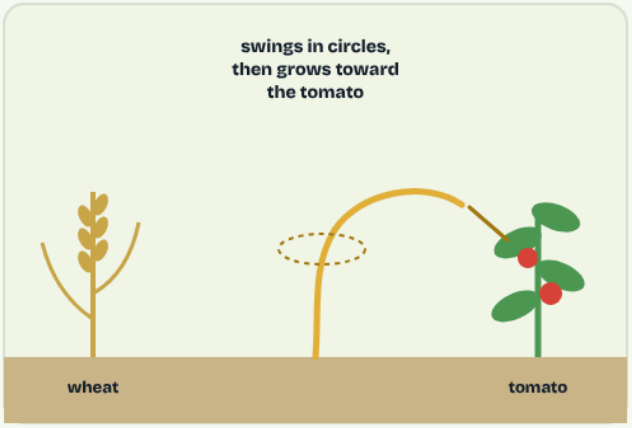
That is why

How does the dodder vine find its victims?

A rootless seedling swings in circles, smells the air and grows toward the host it prefers, then taps into it.

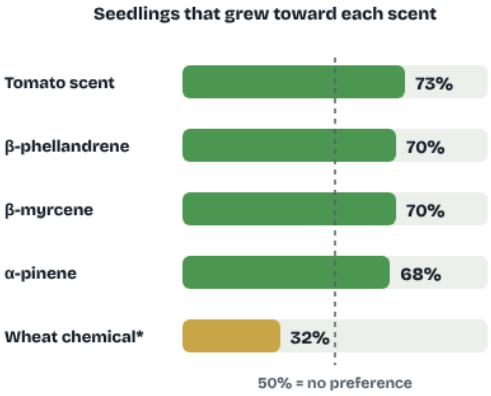
A A seedling on the clock



Born starving

No leaves, no real roots, and almost no ability to make food from sunlight. A seedling can grow only about 4 inches (10 cm) on its own and must find a host within a few days.

B Following its nose

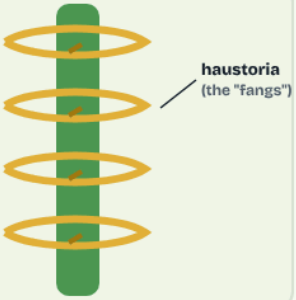


* (Z)-3-hexenyl acetate: 68% grew away.
Tomato chemicals = three parts of its scent.

1 Not fooled by looks

Fake plants, vials of colored water and moist soil got no reaction.

C Tapping in



1 Drinks the host

Draws out its water and nutrients.

2 Swaps messages

Thousands of mRNA molecules flow both ways. What they say: unknown.

No leaves, no roots, just a nose for the right host.

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