That is why

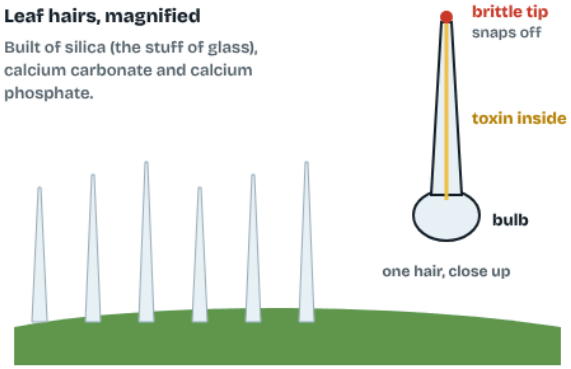
Why does the gympie-gympie sting hurt for so long?

Its hairs snap off in the skin like tiny needles, inject a spider-like toxin, and stay lodged for months.

A A hair like a needle

Leaf hairs, magnified

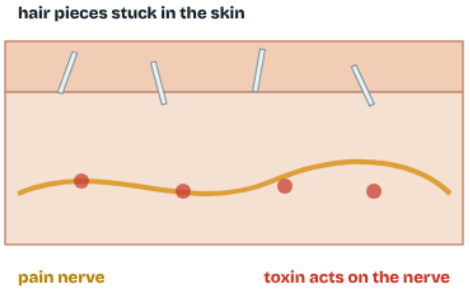
Built of silica (the stuff of glass), calcium carbonate and calcium phosphate.



When the tip breaks off in the skin, the hair works like a hypodermic needle and injects its toxin.

Dried leaves in museum collections, picked more than 100 years ago, can still sting.

B A spider-like toxin



1 Gympietides

A new family of toxins that fold like spider and cone snail venoms and hit the same nerves.

2 A lasting change

They may change pain nerves' sodium channels for good (2020 study).

C Why it keeps coming back



1 Easy triggers

Pressing the skin hard, or washing with hot or cold water, can set it off again.

2 First aid

Tweezers, sticky tape or a wax strip can pull out hairs.

Glass-like needles plus a long-acting toxin: a sting that refuses to end.

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Diagram: https://thatiswhy.com/diagrams/why-gympie-gympie-stings/ · Full guide: https://thatiswhy.com/why-gympie-gympie-hurts-for-years/