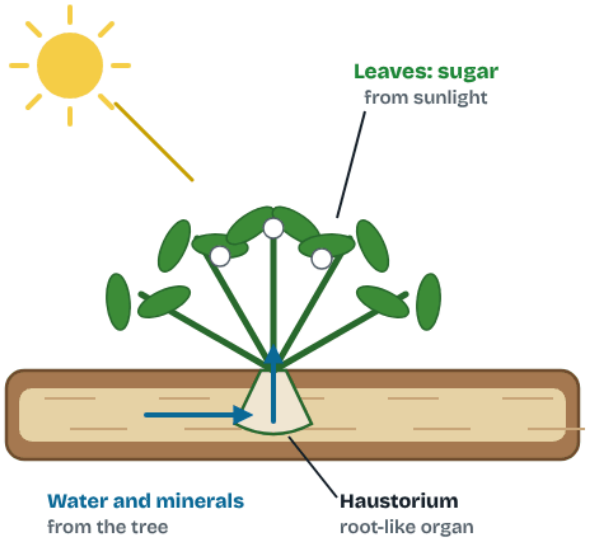
That is why

# Why does mistletoe grow on trees?

A half-parasite: its green leaves make sugar in the sun, while its root-like haustorium drinks the tree's water.

## A Plugged into the branch




### Half a thief: a hemiparasite

It takes the tree's water and minerals, but makes its own food. A healthy tree is unlikely to be badly harmed. All parts of mistletoe are toxic to people.

More than 1,000 species; the habit evolved 5+ times.

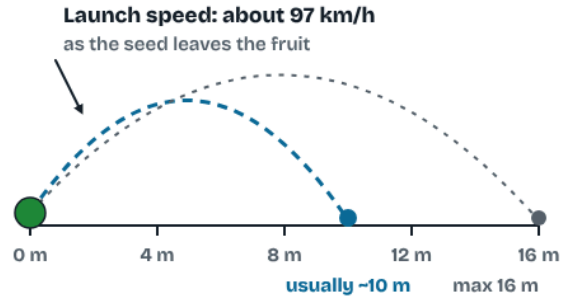
## B Two ways onto a branch

### Leafy mistletoe: planted by birds

1. **A bird eats a berry**
   one seed in sticky viscin
2. **The seed comes out fast**
   "within a few minutes" (mistletoebird)
3. **Wiped onto a branch**
   it sprouts and pushes in its haustorium

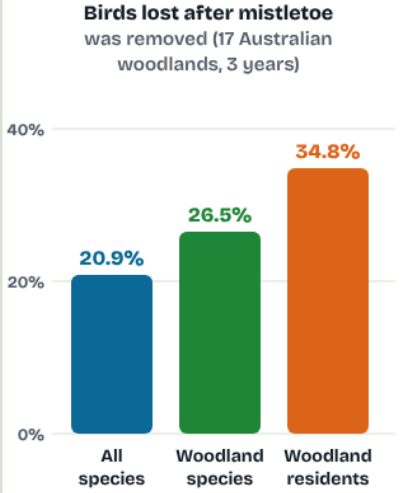
About 90 bird species specialize in mistletoe.

### Dwarf mistletoe (conifers): a seed cannon




Rain or fog: the seed slides down the needle to the bark.

## C Why the forest needs it




1. **Leaf litter feeds**
   Fallen leaves enrich the ground below.
2. **A place to nest**
   245 bird species nest in it in Australia.

**It makes its own food in the sun, but drinks from the tree.**

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