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Singapore scientists control plants using smartphones

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Researchers in Singapore have found a way to talk to plants via a smartphone.

Scientists at Nanyang Technological University managed to control a Venus flytrap using an app on their phone.

The app was able to send a signal to tiny electrodes that had been attached to the trap part of the plant.

The signals told the plant to close its trap, as it does when it's catching a fly.

PHD student Luo Yifei:

"We start from this plant (Venus fly trap) and use our device to study how the electric signals can control or reflect the status of the Venus flytrap and we also apply this technology to other plants like tobacco and sunflowers."

They hope the innovation will have a range of uses from robotics to employing the plants as environmental sensors.

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Communication with plants is not entirely one-way.



The NTU research team hopes their technology can be used to detect signals from plants.



"Plants are like humans, they generate electric signals, like the ECG from our hearts. So these signals tell us how healthy the plants are."

They are also exploring using plants as living sensors to monitor environmental pollution like gas, toxic gas, or water pollution.

But they stressed there was a long way to go before such plant technology could be used commercially.

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