

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# THE SENSITIVE PLANT: A Magic Show at Your Fingertips

by Liana Mahoney

Sensitive people are everywhere. Some have sensitive feet, or skin. Others may have a hard time laughing at their own mistakes. Perhaps you live with someone like this. But can you imagine living with a sensitive plant?

Try this. Hold your hand in front of you with your palm side up, and your fingers pointing towards the right.

Your

Use your other hand to touch the leaves.

time, close each leaf.

Quickly drop your hand.

while, then slowly bring your hand back to its original position.

That wasn't so hard, right? But you're a person!

Imagine behaving like this as a plant!

It's just this kind of behavior that has earned the sensitive plant its name. Brush your fingers gently across the leaves of the sensitive plant, and the leaves instantly fold up like tiny green fingers. The stems, called petioles, droop as if ready to fall off the plant. About ten minutes later, the leaves reopen, and the petioles rise again! The unusual behavior of this houseplant has earned it other common names, such as the "humble plant" and the "touch-me-not."



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house. They might. But the plant to lose its leaves may

become unhealthy.

Having such a unique plant in your house is like having a magic show at your fingertips. Imagine the fun you can have introducing a friend to your plant! Have your friend lean close to the plant to tell it a joke. Then instruct your plant to be the judge of your friend's joke. Give your plant a gentle nudge, and watch your friend's reaction as the plant seems to nod in disapproval. Be sure to tell your friend the true cause of the plant's behavior later, though. You don't want your friend to become overly sensitive about his jokes!

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1. What makes a sensitive plant a very unusual type of plant?

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2. How long does it take the leaves of a sensitive plant to fold up after they've been touched?

- a. about ten minutes                      b. about two minutes  
c. about ten seconds                      d. they fold instantly

3. If you often:



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4. How long does it take a sensitive plant's leaves to reopen after they've folded up?

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5. What two other names is the sensitive plant commonly known by?

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**Something extra:** With a parent or teacher's help, search for a video of a sensitive plant on the Internet.



## **THE SENSITIVE PLANT:**

### **A Magic Show at Your Fingertips**

by Liana Mahoney

1. What makes a sensitive plant a very unusual type of plant?

**It can quickly open and close its leaves after it has been touched.**

2. How long does it take the leaves of a sensitive plant to fold up after they've been touched? **d**

a. about ten minutes

b. about two minutes

c. about ten seconds

d. **they fold instantly**

3. If you have a sensitive plant inside your house, why shouldn't you touch it too often?

**If you unhec**



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**me**

4. How l  
up?

**folded**

**The leaves reopen after about ten minutes.**

5. What two other names is the sensitive plant commonly known by?

**The sensitive plant is also referred to as the “humble plant” and the “touch-me-not.”**

**Something extra:** With a parent or teacher's help, search for a video of a sensitive plant on the Internet.

**Teacher/parent note: Always supervise children when allowing them to use the Internet.**

**At the time of writing, there are many excellent videos of sensitive plants on YouTube. One such video is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3hk9Sz--h4&feature=fvw>**