

Surprising consequence of dinosaur extinction: Helping flowers become a dominant form of plant life

When a [mountain-size slab of space rock](#) rammed into the [Yucatán Peninsula 66 million years ago](#), the fallout was [apocalyptic](#). Tsunamis washed away coastlines, raging fires engulfed forests and dust and debris blotted out the sun for months. Roughly three-fourths of the planet's species, most notably non-avian dinosaurs, were wiped out.

But one group appears to have weathered the maelstrom. In a paper published [September 13] in the journal [Biology Letters](#), researchers present evidence that flowering plants survived the Cretaceous-Paleogene, or [K-Pg, mass extinction](#) relatively unscathed compared with other living things on Earth at the time. The catastrophe may have even helped flowering plants blossom into the dominant green things they are today.

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Flowering plants are known to scientists as angiosperms. They originated in the early Cretaceous, and were often overshadowed by older groups like conifers and ferns. But they rapidly diversified as mass extinction loomed.

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In this way the impact that doomed the dinosaurs gave rise to modern ecosystems. Instead of giant reptiles, these habitats were populated by mammals, who had persisted through the mass extinction along with flowering plants and were primed for a similar explosion in diversity.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)