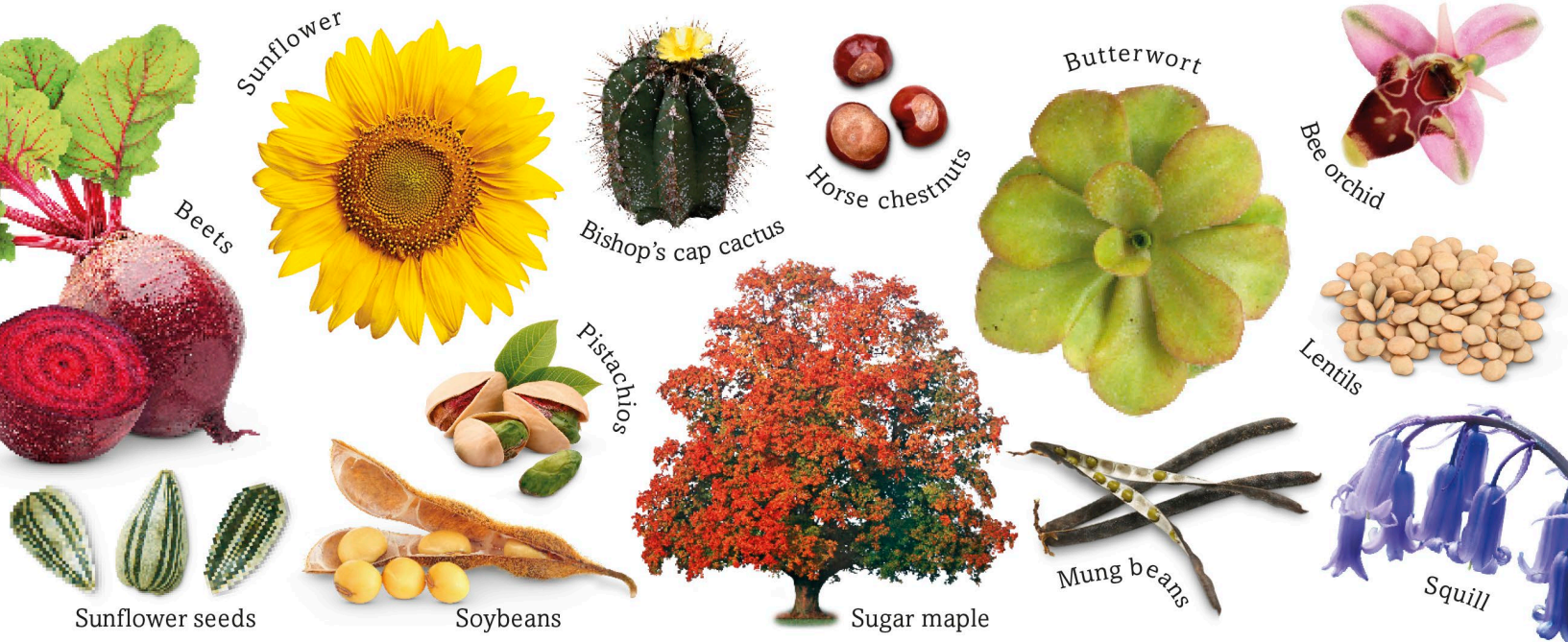




SMITHSONIAN



TREES, LEAVES, FLOWERS & SEEDS

A VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PLANT KINGDOM







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A VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PLANT KINGDOM

WRITTEN BY **DR. SARAH JOSE**
CONSULTANT **DR. CHRIS CLENNETT**





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A WORLD OF IDEAS:
SEE ALL THERE IS TO KNOW

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Smithsonian

Established in 1846, the Smithsonian—the world's largest museum and research complex—includes 19 museums and galleries and the National Zoological Park. The Smithsonian is a renowned research center, dedicated to public education, national service, and scholarship in the arts, sciences, and natural history. Smithsonian Gardens, an accredited museum and Public Garden, engages people with plants and gardens, informs on the roles both play in our cultural and natural worlds, and inspires appreciation and stewardship of living and archival collections and horticultural artifacts.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

6

THE WORLD OF PLANTS

8

The plant kingdom	10
What is a plant?	12
How do roots work?	14
What is a stem?	16
Living bridges	18
How do seeds grow?	20
Seed shapes	22
Scattering seeds	24
Spreading without seeds	26
The life cycle of a plant	28
What is a leaf?	30
Simple leaves	32
Compound leaves	34
Plants with patterns	36
Symmetrical swirls	38
Self-defense	40
Plants and nitrogen	42

NONFLOWERING PLANTS

44

Nonflowering plants	46
Ancient plants	48
What is a fern?	50
Fern fronds	52
Dinosaur diet	54
What is a conifer cone?	56
Pines and needles	58
Conifer cones	60



FLOWERING PLANTS

62

What is a flower?	64
Flower forms	66
Pollinators	68
Looks familiar	70
River of blossom	72
A garden of roses	74
Crazy for daisies	76
Ingenious orchids	78
Blossoms and bulbs	80
What's that smell?	82
Living in water	84
Along the river	86
Flooded forest	88
What is a cactus?	90
Cool cacti	92
Desert survivors	94
Desert bloom	96
Meat-eating plants	98
Poisonous plants	100
Parasitic plants	102
Mountain life	104
Creepers and climbers	106
What is a tree?	108
Types of trees	110
Barking up the tree	112
Standing tall	114
Blossom time	116
Living on air	118
Strangler fig	120
The forest floor	122
Bonsai	124
What is a grass?	126
Types of grasses	128
Grasses and grains	130
Rice terraces	132
Fruit or vegetable?	134

Going underground	136
Soft fruits	138
Volcanic vineyard	140
Stone fruits	142
Juicy fruits	144
Tropical fruits	146
Magnificent melons	148
A bit nutty	150
Eat your greens!	152
Peas and beans	154
All squashed up!	156
Pumpkin boat race	158
Bulbs, stems, and stalks	160

LIVING WITH PLANTS

162

Plants and people	164
The spices of life	166
Helpful herbs	168
Plant products	170
Shrinking forest	172
Natural beauty	174
Plants of the world	176
Plant science	178
Space garden	180

GLOSSARY	182
PLANT INDEX	184
INDEX	188
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	192





FOREWORD

Plants are essential for life. They make our planet's atmosphere breathable, their decaying bodies create the soil under our feet, and they transform light energy into consumable nutrients that keep us alive. They also inspire artists; think of Georgia O'Keeffe's *Poppies*, Claude Monet's *Water Lilies*, and Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers*.

Trees, Leaves, Flowers & Seeds combines the art and science of plants, revealing complex botanical details in beautiful photographs and simple graphics. While previewing this book, I wondered where it was when I was a child interested in learning more about plants.

It reminded me why I began my career in horticulture. At its most basic level, horticulture is the science and art of growing plants.

This amalgamation of disciplines is what first attracted me to the profession and has held my interest for more than 40 years. This volume brought me back to Hort Studies 101, with each chapter examining different plants, their parts, and how they interact with the world around them. Thankfully, the photographs used reveal details—ranging from tangled roots to distinctive seed and flower shapes—that surpass the old transparency sheets used by my professors.

Similar to *Trees, Leaves, Flowers & Seeds*, Smithsonian Gardens combines art and science in its many diverse garden and landscape exhibits. While their beauty is often what initially attracts visitors, the science they embody showcases our living collections and provides





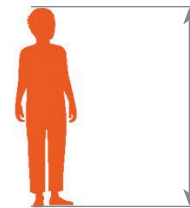
depths of engagement with our audiences. Our gardens are delightful examples of performative art. They change every season, indeed every day, of their existence. Smithsonian Gardens' staff horticulturists and gardeners are extraordinarily knowledgeable when it comes to plant science, yet so much of their work evolves into genuine artistry thanks to their natural skill in combining living collections.

Perhaps the fascinating information and engaging photographs in *Trees, Leaves, Flowers & Seeds* will launch an inquisitive child's journey into the mesmerizing world of plants.

Cynthia Brown

Smithsonian Gardens Education and Collections Manager

Throughout this book, you will find scale boxes that show the sizes of plants compared to either a child, a school bus, or a human hand.



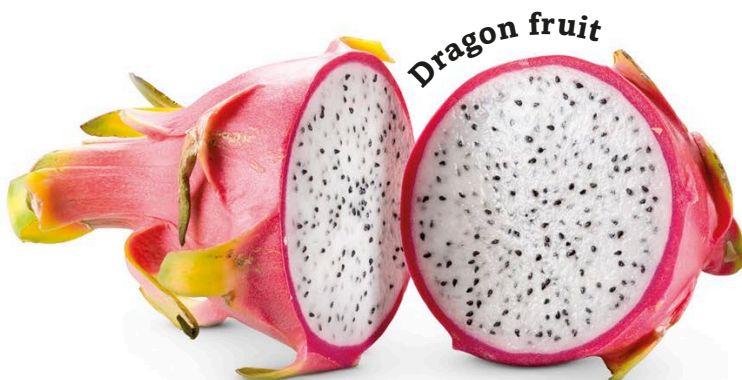
Child = $4\frac{3}{4}$ ft
(1.45 m) tall



School bus = 36 ft
(11 m) wide



Hand = 6 in
(16 cm) long







THE WORLD OF PLANTS



Nonflowering plants

These are the oldest plants and include ferns and mosses, which reproduce using spores. Conifers, which produce naked (not enclosed) seeds, also belong to this group.

Liverworts



Common liverwort

Mosses



Star moss

Hornworts



Smooth hornwort

Lycopods



Stiff clubmoss

The plant kingdom

There are around 400,000 different types of plants, and botanists—scientists specializing in plants—discover new ones all the time. Hundreds of millions of years ago, the first plants were small and did not flower. Over time, the process of evolution has created a fantastic range of plants, from simple ferns to stunning cherry blossoms and spiky cacti. To bring order to this incredible variety, botanists divide up plants into nonflowering and flowering plants. Within these categories, there are many species, and some of them are shown here.

Grasses



Little bluestem

Daisies



Figaro dahlia

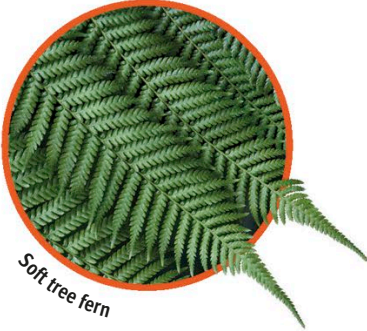


PLANT KINGDOM

Flowering plants

Angiosperms, or flowering plants, make up more than 90 percent of all plants. They produce seeds that are protected by a hard casing.

Ferns



Gymnosperms



Angiosperms



Monocots

Monocots have just one seed leaf, which grows into a new plant. They often have long, narrow leaves. Grasses, orchids, and palms are examples of monocots.

Orchids



Palms



Dicots

Dicots have two seed leaves, which appear together when a new plant starts to grow. They mostly have broad leaves. Dicots include daisies, roses, cacti, and legumes.

Roses



Cacti



Legumes





What is a plant?

Plants come in all shapes and sizes—from tiny green mosses to giant trees—but almost all plants contain a green pigment called chlorophyll. This chemical harnesses the energy of sunlight to make the food (a sugar called glucose) that the plant needs to grow. As part of this process, called photosynthesis, plants take carbon dioxide gas from the air and turn it into food, while releasing oxygen, which all animals need to breathe.

Flower ➤ This colorful part of the plant contains the male and female cells that are responsible for producing seeds.

Tendrils ➤ This plant has a special stem, called a tendril, which wraps around nearby objects, helping support the plant.

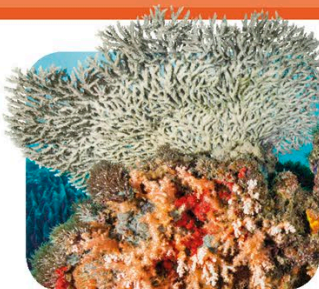


Not a plant



Lichens

A lichen is made up of algae and fungi living together. The algae help make food, while the fungi provide shade.



Corals

Corals are tiny, underwater animals with hard skeletons. To grow, they depend on algae in their tissues to make energy from sunlight.



Algae

Many algae are green, like plants, but do not have true roots, stems, and leaves. Algae can live only in water.



Fungi

Unlike plants, fungi get their food from the soil, or from other plants and animals on which they grow.



Stem > The stem supports the plant. It can be short or tall, woody or nonwoody.

Leaf > This is the power station of a plant. Leaves use sunlight to make the energy the plant needs to grow.

Cucumber plant

Fruit > A fruit contains the plant's seeds, protecting them from harm. Colorful fruits attract animals to eat them and then spread the seeds in their droppings.

Flowering plant

This cucumber plant uses flowers to reproduce and make seeds for new plants. However, not all plants have flowers—simple plants, such as mosses and conifers, reproduce in other ways. It is sometimes difficult to tell what is a plant and what is not—seaweed and fungi, for example, are not plants.

Root > Plants use their roots to anchor themselves to the ground. Roots also draw water and nutrients from the soil to keep the plant alive.



How do roots work?

Most plants have roots, which anchor the plant in the ground. Roots soak up vital water from the soil, along with the dissolved minerals that the plant uses to grow. Grasses have tufts of fibrous roots, but most other plants grow at least one taproot, which then sprouts smaller lateral (side) roots that spread outward.

Taproot > As a seed starts to grow, one or more strong roots push down into the soil. This is the plant's taproot, and it grows only at its tip, forcing soil particles aside with a tough root cap as it grows deeper into the ground.

Leaf > A plant's leaves use the energy from sunlight to make sugar. Water is drawn up through the roots and sugary sap moves down from the leaves, powering the plant's growth.

**Burdock
root**



Lateral root > These spindly roots branch out from the main taproots to form a complex, tangled network of roots.

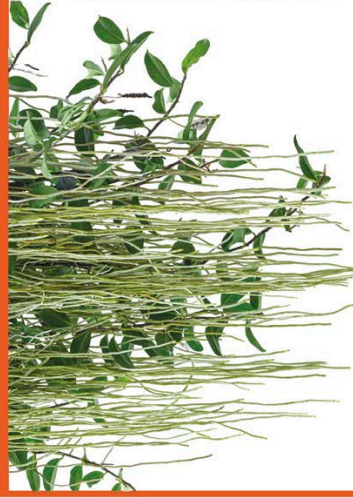


Root hair > Tiny root hairs sprout from just above the growing tip of each root. They grow between soil particles and absorb the water and minerals that the plant needs to grow.

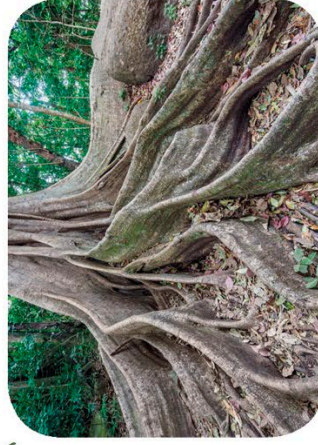


Root hairs grow from the root's skin cells (seen here in pink).

Types of roots



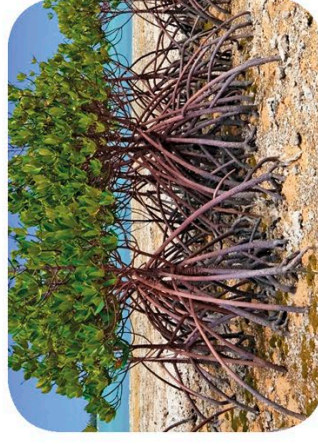
Aerial Some plants, typically in tropical forests, grow in the treetops with roots that cling to the tree bark for support. The American pearl laceleaf grows roots that hang in the moist air to absorb essential water.



Buttress Many tropical rain forest trees are supported by roots that spread out partly above the ground. This is because most rain forest soil is not very deep and these surface roots help anchor the tree.



Pneumatophore Rooted in waterlogged, airless mud, these mangrove trees grow in swampy, subtropical brackish (salty) water. Some have roots that grow upwards into the air to gather oxygen.



Stilt Mangroves growing on muddy tidal seashores are swept by waves at high tide. Many mangrove trees have stiltlike roots that arch down from their trunks to help support them in the moving water.

What is a stem?

A stem is like a plant's backbone, holding it up and connecting its roots, leaves, flowers, and fruits. It raises the leaves toward the sunlight so they can make food, which is then transported by the stem to the rest of the plant. It also carries water and nutrients up from the roots. There are many different types of stems, from soft, green stems to hard tree trunks.

Sugarcane

Tough stem ➤ This tall grass supports itself with a tough stem. Special tissues running down the stem transport the sugar made in its leaves to other parts of the plant. Sugarcane stems hold a lot of sugar, which can be harvested and dried to produce the sugar that we eat.

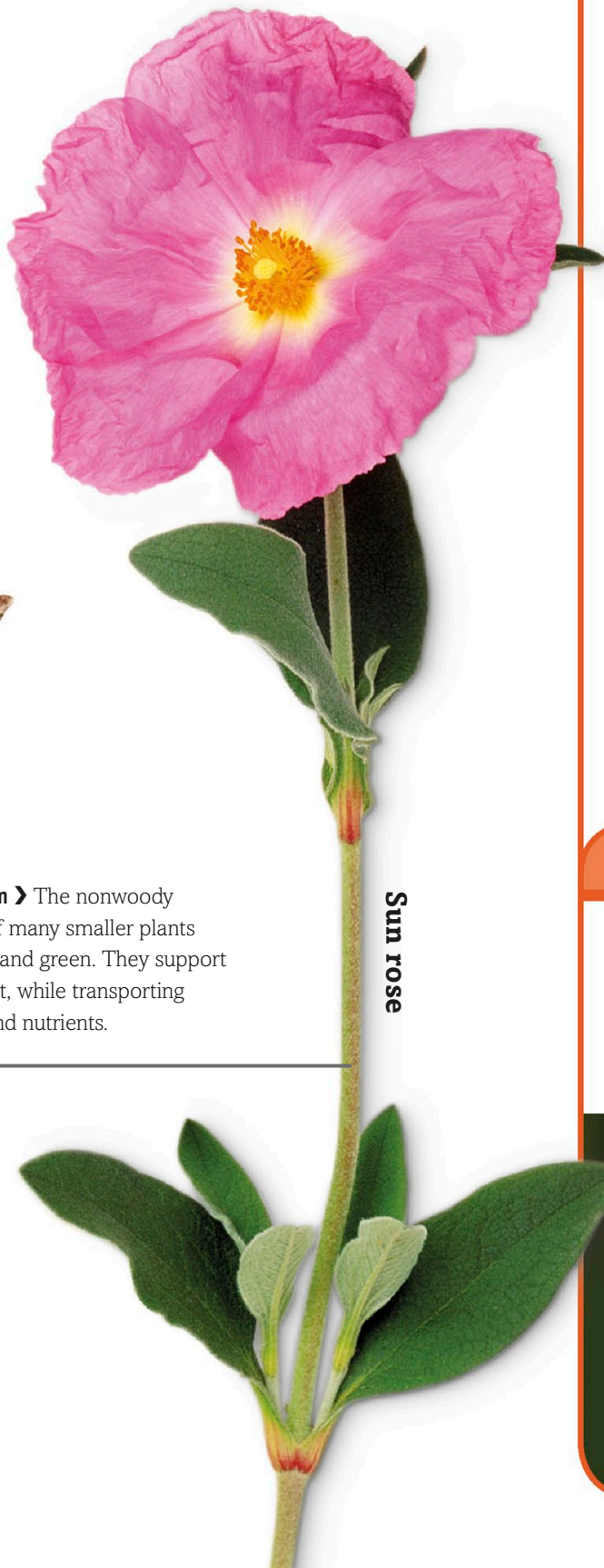
Creeper stem ➤ Young English ivy stems are soft and flexible, with tiny anchoring roots to help it climb. As the plant grows, the stems grow thicker and harder, sending out side shoots to explore new spaces.

English ivy



Corkscrew
hazel

Woody stem ➤ Trunks and branches are woody stems, which are stiff and strong to provide support for tall trees. The live tissue (cambium) is protected by an outer covering of dead bark. These stems expand by producing new layers of woody tissue each year—the growth rings that can be seen in cut tree trunks.

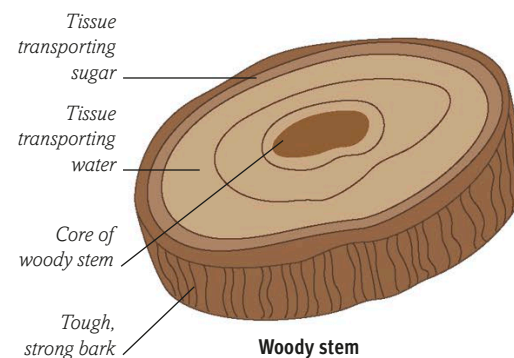
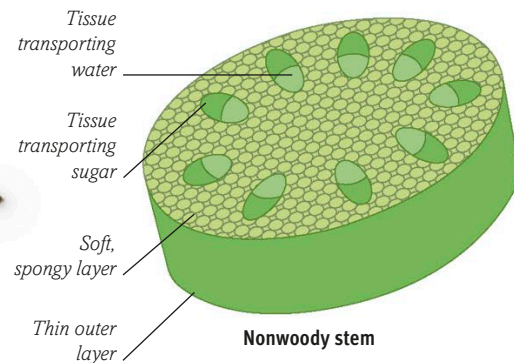


Sun rose

Soft stem ➤ The nonwoody stems of many smaller plants are soft and green. They support the plant, while transporting water and nutrients.

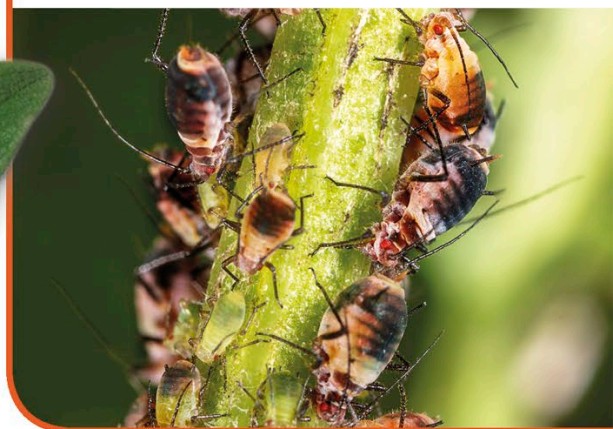
Types of stems

There are many types of stem. Woody stems contain two layers of tissue—one transports water, and the other food in the form of sugar. In nonwoody stems, these tissues are combined into tubes. Woody stems are protected by thickened bark, while nonwoody stems are covered by a thin, protective tissue layer.



Sweet sap suckers

Small bugs called aphids puncture stems to suck out the sweet, nutrient-rich liquid transported inside it. These insects don't usually kill the plant but can often slow down its growth and carry diseases that might harm it.





LIVING BRIDGES The state of Meghalaya in northeast India is one of the wettest regions in the world, with almost 39 ft (12 m) of rainfall each year. The rains flood the rivers, making travel difficult, but the local Khasi Tribe came up with a clever way to stay connected with other villages. Using the roots of the rubber fig tree, they built strong, living bridges that can hold up to 50 people at once.



This type of bridge is made by twisting the aerial roots (roots that grow above ground) of rubber fig trees around temporary bridges made of bamboo or tree trunks, which then rot away over time. Once the tree roots reach the other side of the river, they are planted into the ground so they can grow thicker and stronger. It can take about

15–20 years to build a living bridge, which can grow to more than 164 ft (50 m) in length. The strongest living bridges are more than 100 years old, with some believed to be more than 500 years old. This double-decker bridge in Cherrapunji is more than 180 years old, and the local people are now adding a third level to it to attract more tourists.



How do seeds grow?

Plants are rooted to the spot, so to reproduce and spread, flowering plants make seeds from which new plants grow. A seed contains a tiny young plant called an embryo, which lies dormant (inactive) until it senses the perfect conditions to germinate and grow into a new plant.

The right conditions

Seeds need ideal conditions—warmth, air, and water—to germinate. Some need darkness to sense they are properly buried. Others need light to know they are not buried too deep.



Young shoot > Next, a young shoot emerges from the seed, growing upward until it breaks out of the soil. It quickly begins to make food using sunlight.

Germination > A seed lies dormant until it detects moisture and warmth. It then absorbs water from the soil, and the seed springs to life, in a process known as germination.

First root > Most seeds begin germination by sending a root downward into the soil. The root absorbs water and nutrients from the soil and passes them on to the developing shoot.

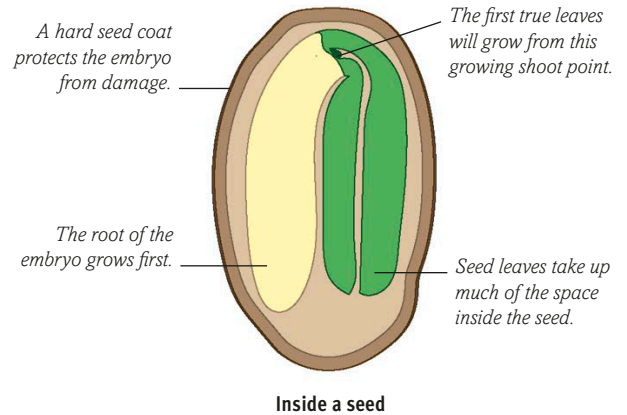


Seed leaves ➤ The first leaf, or pair of leaves, in a flowering plant often looks very different to the true leaves the seedling will grow later. This is because the seed leaves were part of the embryo that lived inside the seed.



Inside a seed

A seed is a perfectly packaged baby plant, called an embryo, protected by a hard outer coat. The embryo has a root and a shoot, and the first true leaves. It also has a food store for the embryo in “seed leaves.”



One leaf or two?

There are two main types of flowering plants—monocots and dicots—named for the number of seed leaves they have. Monocot seeds contain one seed leaf, while dicot seeds have two.

Two broad seed leaves grow out of a dicot seed.



Corn seed (monocot)



Germinating monocot seed



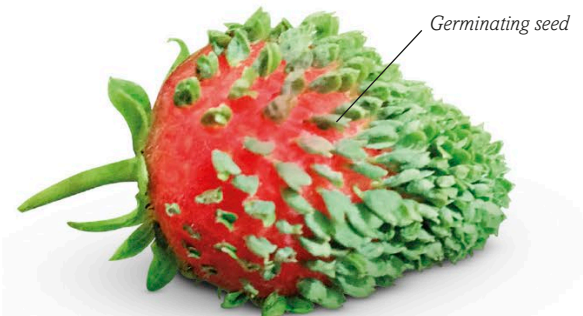
Bean (dicot)



Germinating dicot seed

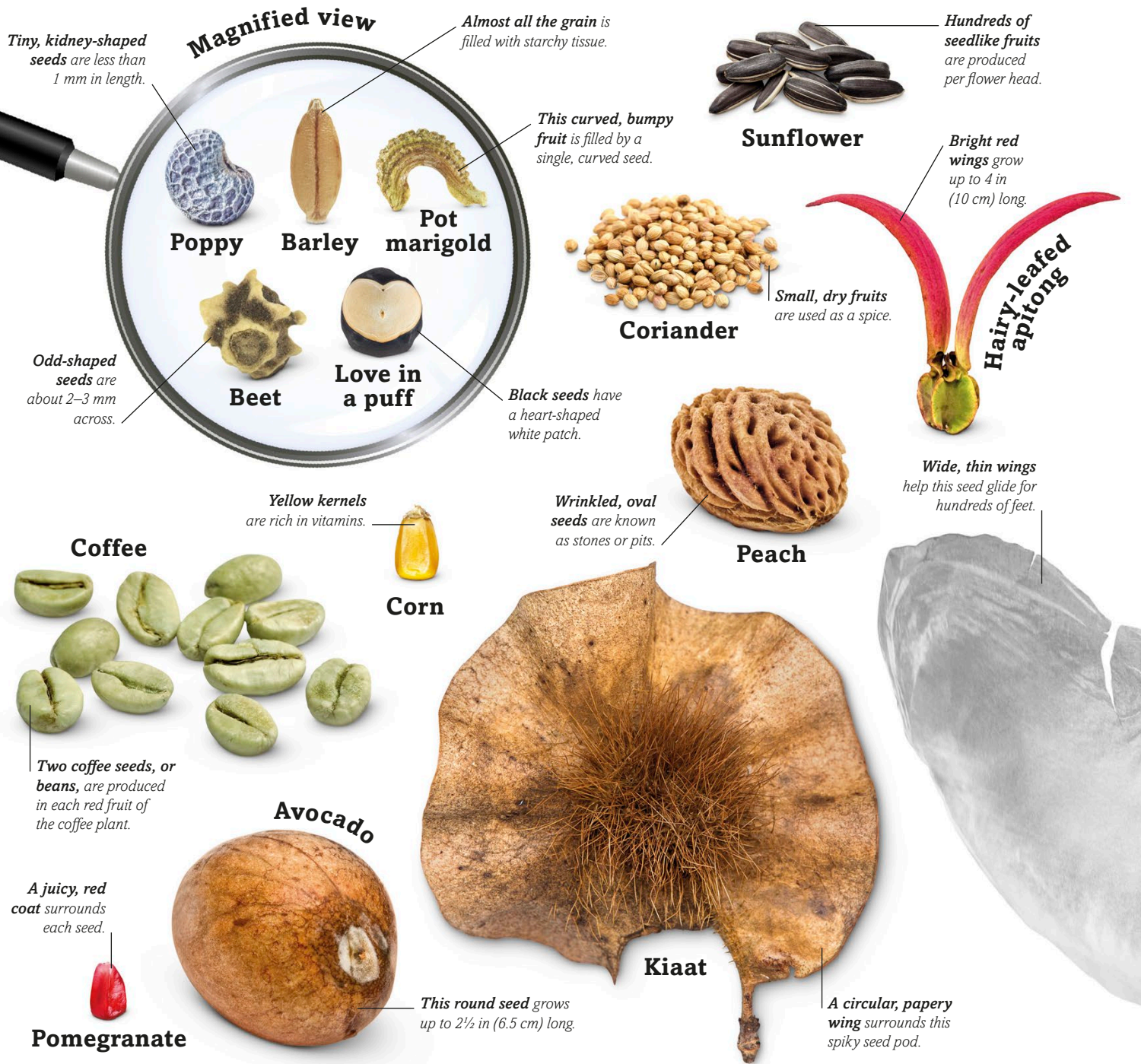
Early germination

Sometimes seeds germinate before they have parted from their parent plant. This early germination may take the form of shoots growing on the outside of a fruit, as on this strawberry. In other fruits, shoots may even burst through the fruit wall from the seeds held inside.





Seed shapes



A seed is a small package that protects a young plant and contains all the nutrients the plant will need to germinate. Although all seeds do the same job, they come in a wide range of shapes and sizes, to help each one survive in its particular environment and spread without being eaten by hungry animals.

The giant **coco de mer** seed is able to hold a lot of nutrients so that the new plant has enough energy to grow out of its mother's shadow. The **poppy** has another survival strategy—rather than one big seed, it produces tens of thousands of tiny seeds to maximize its chances. The spiky coats of the **horse chestnut** seed and the **kiaat** seed pod



**Horse
chestnut**

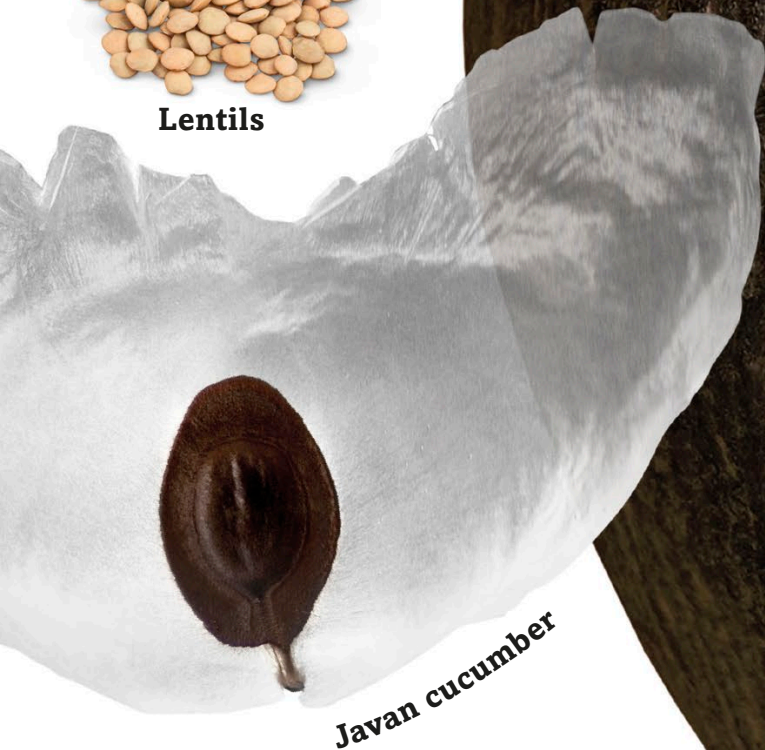
*These glossy
seeds are protected
by a spiky shell.*

*These massive seeds
are the largest and heaviest
in the world, weighing up
to 39 ½ lb (18 kg) each.*



Lentils

*Flat, circular seeds are
a good source of protein.*



Javan cucumber

Coco de mer



deter hungry animals, while other seeds, such as those of the **avocado** and **peach**, are too hard for most plant eaters to munch. Sometimes, what we think of as seeds are, in fact, fruits with seeds inside, including those of the **sunflower**, **coriander**, and **pot marigold**.



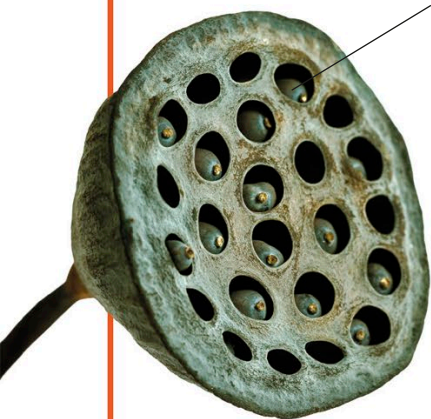
Blackberry

Juicy berries are eaten by harvest mice, which pass the seeds in their poo.



Dandelion

Scattering seeds

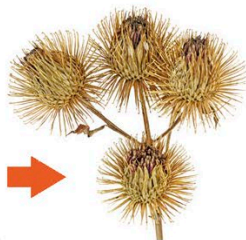


When shaken, lotus seeds fall from the dried seed pod and into the lake or pond in which the plant grows.



Lotus

Spiky burdock seeds can grow up to 1 in (3 cm) across.



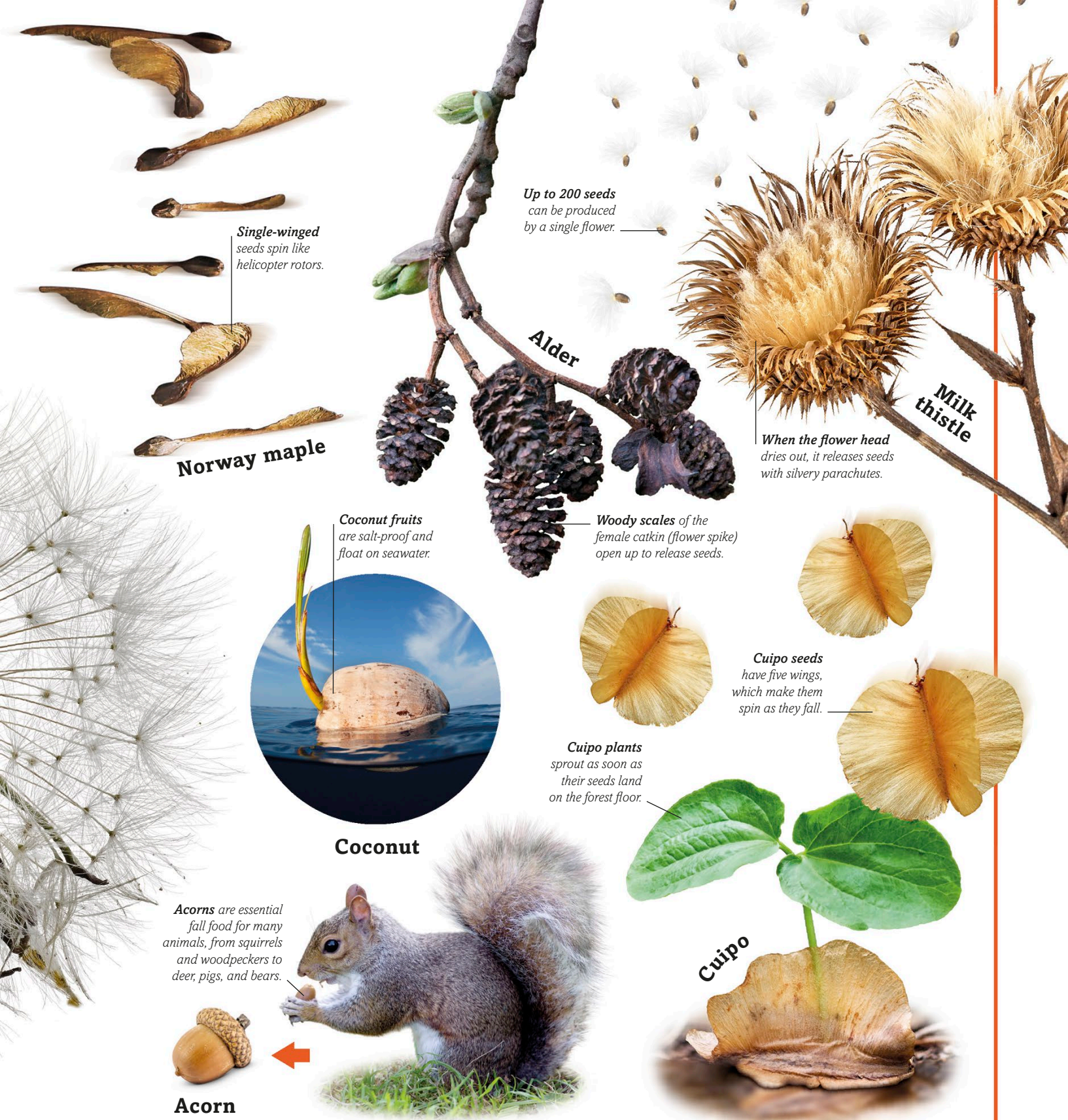
Burdock

Between 90 and 110 feathery bristles radiate outward to form a parachute on every seed.



Plants are anchored by roots and can't move from one place to another. If they dropped their seeds where they stood, the new plants would be in competition for nutrients and sunlight. So plants have developed many ways to make sure their seeds scatter far and wide to take advantage of new places in which to grow. They use exploding seed pods, animals, the wind, or even water to spread their seeds.





Wind and water carry seeds farthest. **Dandelion** and **milk thistle** seeds have parachutes that carry them on the breeze, while **maple** and **cuipo** seeds catch the wind as they fall from the tree canopy. Amazingly, **coconut** seeds can travel hundreds of miles on ocean currents. Animals are also important seed spreaders.

When animals eat fruit, the undigested seeds inside the fruit pass through their droppings. **Burdock** seeds are covered in hooks that get caught in animal fur and transported. Squirrels bury hundreds of **acorns** each fall to eat in winter. The ones they forget about germinate into new oak trees.



Spreading without seeds



Mint

Tiny plantlets with roots form along the fleshy leaves.



Plantlet

Underground stems can send out new shoots around the mother plant.



Iris

Spreading underground stems are partially visible through a thin layer of soil.



Beech

Stems grow from the base of the old tree.

Mother of thousands

Each leaf can produce dozens of tiny plantlets.

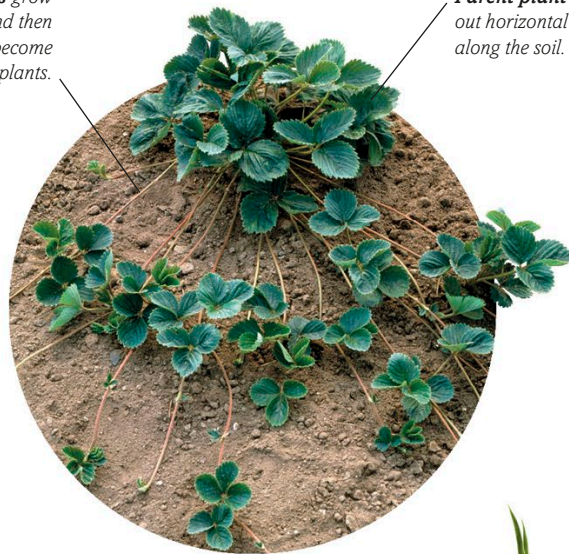
Some plants have evolved ways to spread quickly over an area without seeds. To do this, they make perfect copies of themselves using modified stems, forming underground storage organs, or growing baby plants on the margins of their leaves.

Plants such as **mint**, **strawberry**, and **bamboo** send out long stems, either just below or on top of the soil, which can put down roots and grow into whole new plants. The creeping underground stems, or rhizomes, of some **irises** also send up new plants as they spread. Other plants, such as **sweet potatoes**, produce underground storage



Spider plant

These stems grow roots and then leaves to become independent plants.



Strawberry

Parent plant sends out horizontal stems along the soil.

New bamboo shoots can grow up to 35 in (90 cm) in a day.

STEM RUNNERS

The strawberry plant produces long stems called runners that run along or just under the soil. New strawberry plants grow at the knots, or nodes, on the runners, quickly colonizing an area with good soil.

Runners lay down roots before new plants can grow.

Parent plant New plant

Plantlets grow on dangling stems.

New shoots grow from marks called "eyes."

Sweet potato

Fleshy root tubers are popular starchy foods.

Underground stems spread quickly, sending up new shoots.



Bamboo

organs called tubers. If harsh weather kills off their leaves, new plants can regrow from the starchy tuber, using it for food. **Spider plants** grow new leaves at the tips of their hanging flower stems, which quickly grow roots when they detect that they

are touching the ground. The **mother of thousands** plant takes this even further, producing tiny plantlets, complete with roots, along the edges of its leaves. These eventually drop off the mother plant and grow around its base.



The life cycle of a plant

Flowering plants may have a life span of just months, or many years. A poppy will germinate, flower, set seed, and die within a year and is known as an annual plant. Other flowering plants live for several years, building up the food reserves they need and storing it. These are called perennial plants. The harsher the climate, the longer it can take for a plant to complete its life cycle.

Late bloomer

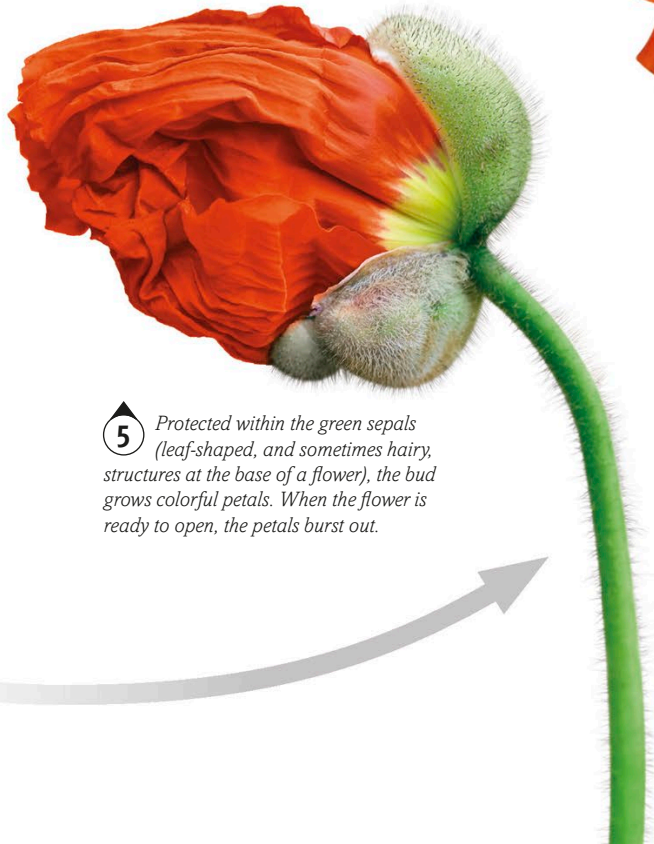
High in the cold Andes Mountains of South America, the queen of the Andes plant grows very slowly. It takes over 80 years to bloom and grows a spike nearly 30 ft (10 m) tall, with up to 30,000 flowers, dwarfing the surrounding plants. After shedding millions of seeds, it dies.



Poppy



7 As soon as a flower is pollinated, it sheds its petals. Seeds form inside the fruit.



5 Protected within the green sepals (leaf-shaped, and sometimes hairy, structures at the base of a flower), the bud grows colorful petals. When the flower is ready to open, the petals burst out.

6 Once the petals open up, insects, such as bees, are attracted to the sweet nectar inside and pollinate the flower.





What is a leaf?

Leaves are usually flat, green structures that grow from plant stems. Although they come in many shapes and sizes, almost all of them capture sunlight and produce food for the plant. Leaves get their green color from a pigment called chlorophyll that uses sunlight to produce food from the plant in a process called photosynthesis.

Small netted veins ➤ Networks of tiny veins connect the green tissues of the leaf to the main vein inside the midrib and the stem beyond.

Stomata ➤ Tiny pores on the underside of the leaf, called stomata, open during the day to take in carbon dioxide but close at night to avoid losing too much water.

Underside of apple leaf

Petiole ➤ This is the stiff stalk connecting the leaf to the plant stem. In some plants, these stalks can help leaves move and follow the sun in order to absorb more light.

Blade ➤ The flat part of the leaf is called the leaf blade. It is the green tissue that absorbs sunlight to make the sugar the plant needs to grow.



Midrib ➤ Running along the center of the leaf, this thickened area contains the central vein. It also provides support to the leaf to prevent it from bending and breaking.

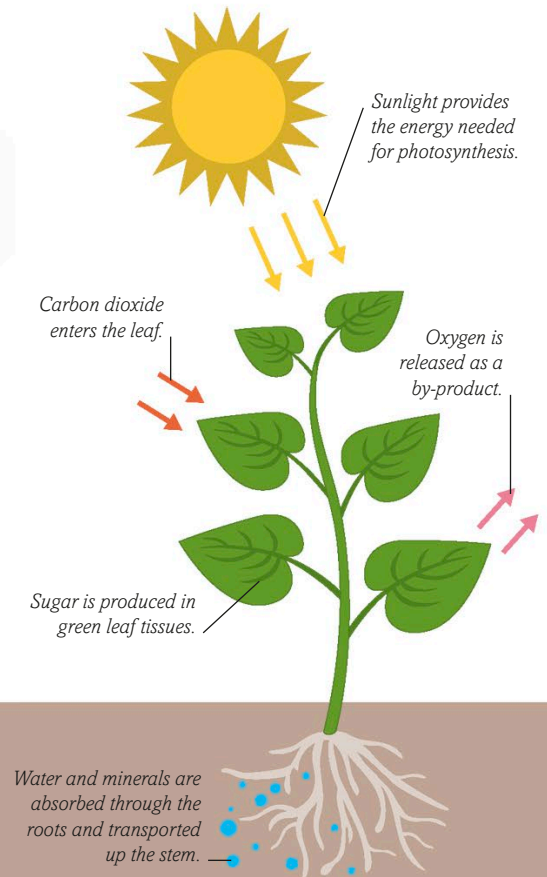


Apple leaf

Vein ➤ Plant veins have two types of tubes running through them. One type, called xylem, carries water from the roots to the shoots. The other type, known as phloem, transports sugars around the plant.

Photosynthesis

Plants make their own food in a process called photosynthesis. Their leaves contain a light-harvesting pigment called chlorophyll. This green chemical uses the sun's energy to convert carbon dioxide from the air and water from the soil into food (in the form of sugars) and oxygen.



Fall leaves

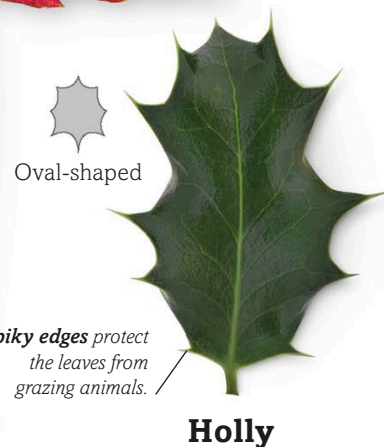
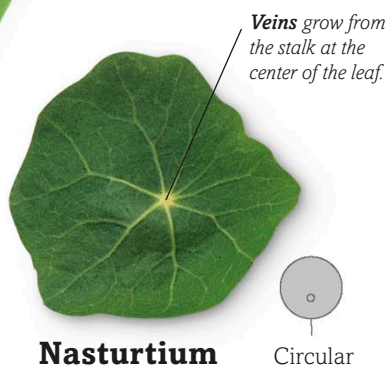
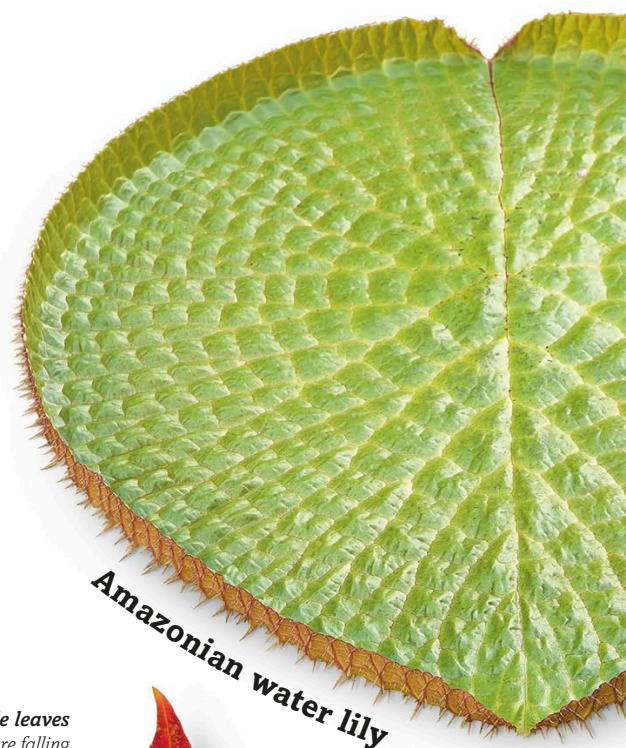
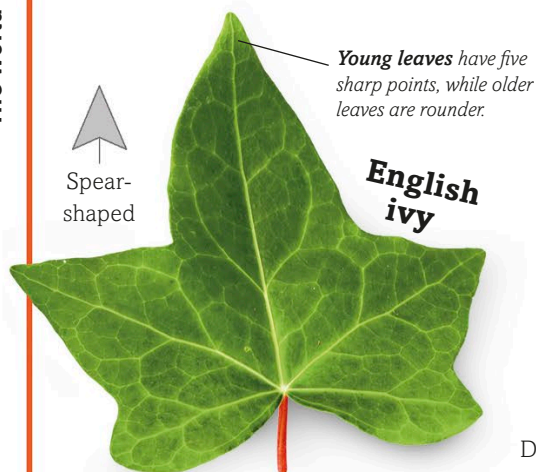
As fall approaches, the green pigment chlorophyll is replaced at a slower rate than it is used up. The reduced chlorophyll levels mean other leaf pigments, including orange-yellow ones, become more obvious. At the same time, plants start producing red-purple pigments. These changes result in the beautiful fall displays of leaf colors.



Maple leaves in fall

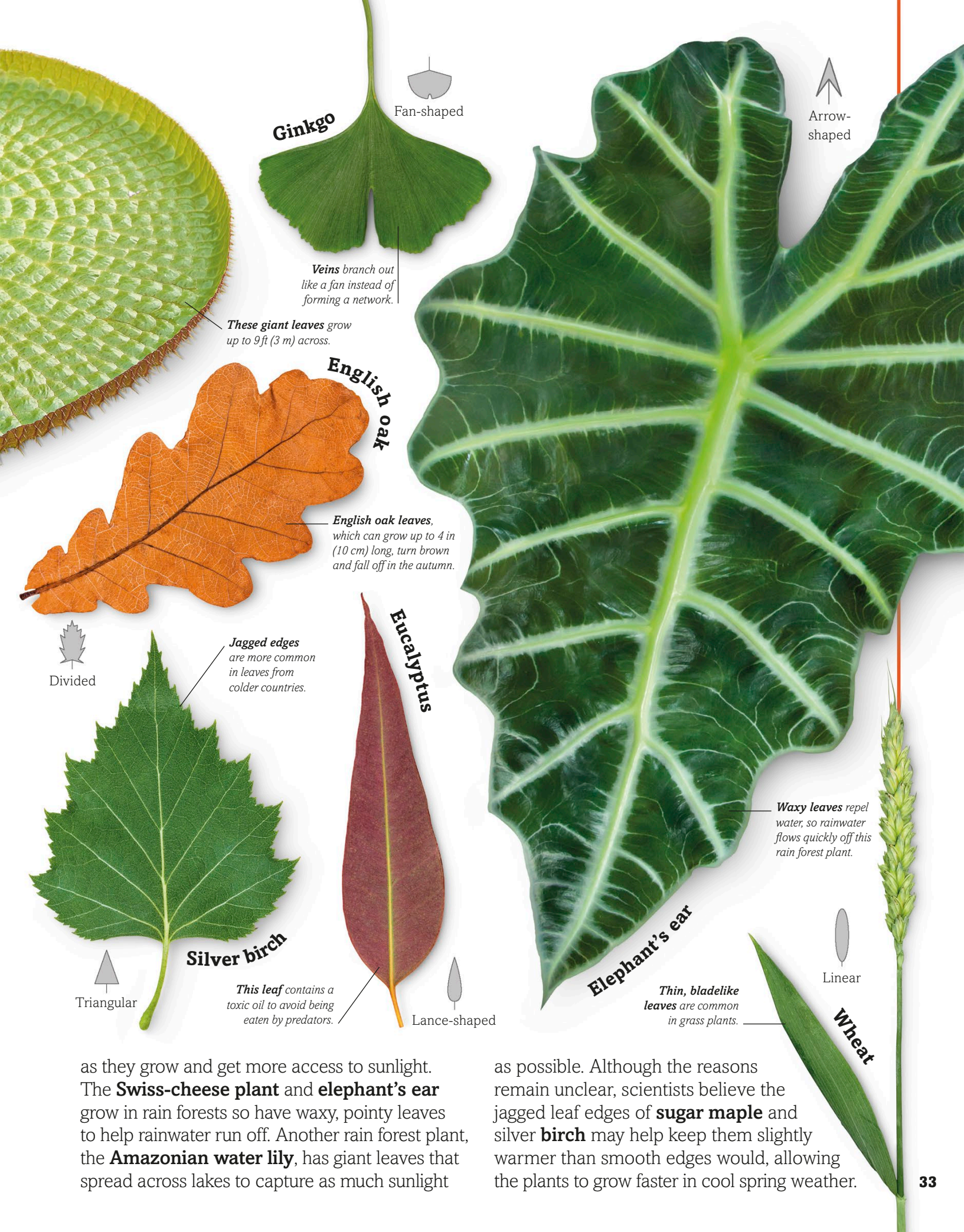


Simple leaves



A leaf typically consists of a flat surface called a blade, which carries a network of veins. These veins support the leaves and transport the water and minerals to them from the rest of the plant. A simple leaf has a single, undivided blade.

Simple leaves come in many shapes and sizes, and those best suited to their habitat are the most likely to thrive. In wet rain forest conditions plants have big leaves, while plants in drier locations usually have small leaves. Some plants, such as **English ivy** and **ginkgo**, change their leaf shape



Ginkgo

Fan-shaped

Veins branch out like a fan instead of forming a network.

These giant leaves grow up to 9 ft (3 m) across.

English oak

English oak leaves, which can grow up to 4 in (10 cm) long, turn brown and fall off in the autumn.

Divided

Jagged edges are more common in leaves from colder countries.

Silver birch

Triangular

This leaf contains a toxic oil to avoid being eaten by predators.

Eucalyptus

Lance-shaped

Elephant's ear

Thin, blade-like leaves are common in grass plants.

Arrow-shaped

Waxy leaves repel water, so rainwater flows quickly off this rain forest plant.

Linear

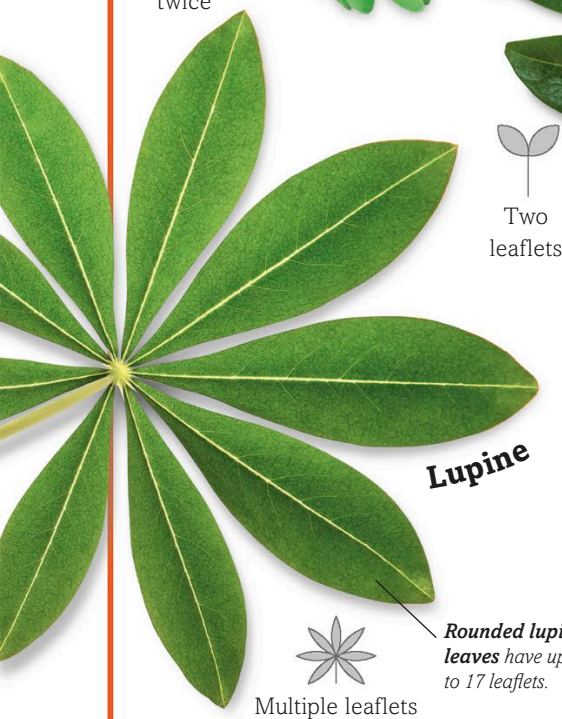
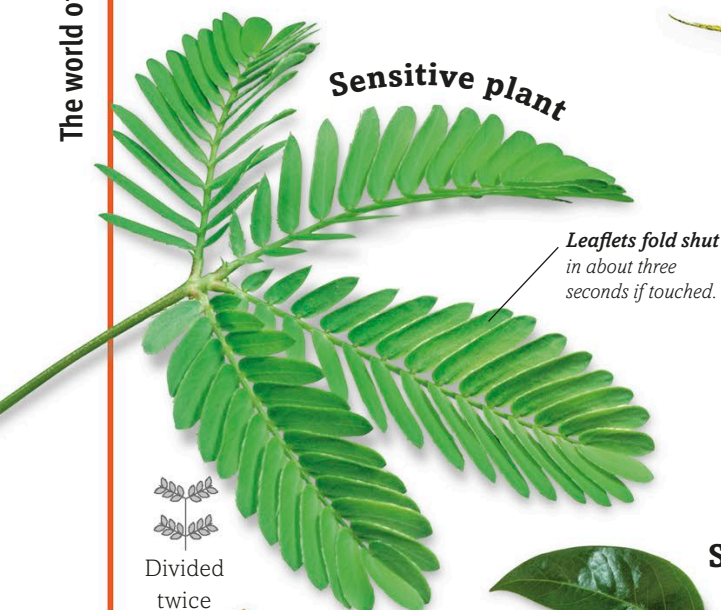
Wheat

as they grow and get more access to sunlight. The **Swiss-cheese plant** and **elephant's ear** grow in rain forests so have waxy, pointy leaves to help rainwater run off. Another rain forest plant, the **Amazonian water lily**, has giant leaves that spread across lakes to capture as much sunlight

as possible. Although the reasons remain unclear, scientists believe the jagged leaf edges of **sugar maple** and silver **birch** may help keep them slightly warmer than smooth edges would, allowing the plants to grow faster in cool spring weather.



Compound leaves



A compound leaf is one that is divided into two or more parts called leaflets. These leaflets grow either along the stalk like a feather or from a single point like a fan. Compound leaves come in a wide range of shapes and sizes.

A compound leaf has separate leaflets with less individual surface area than a simple leaf. In a dry region, this helps the plant to reduce the amount of water lost through evaporation. Compound leaves, like that of the **lupine**, flutter less in windy conditions than simple leaves,



Honey locust

Veins from the main leaf stalk run through each leaflet.



Divided into an odd number of leaflets

Four heart-shaped leaflets grow from a single stalk.



Four-leafed pink sorrel



Four leaflets

Flat leaf stalk looks like a second leaf below the true leaf.



Horse chestnut

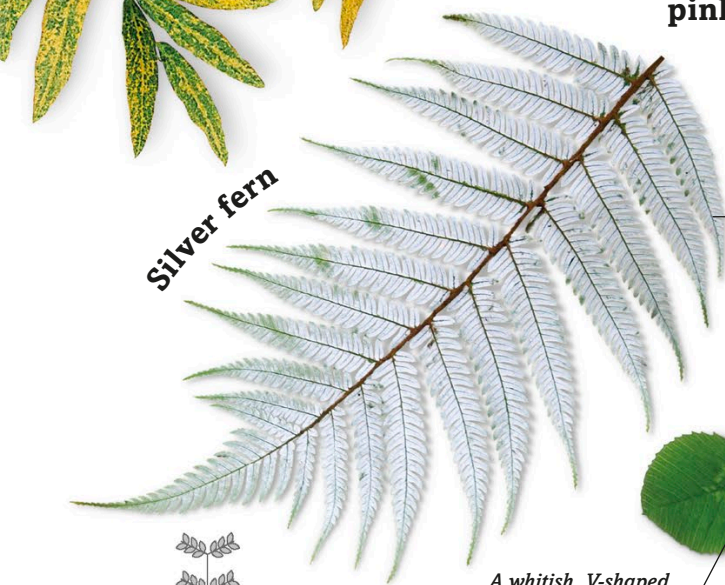


Five leaflets



Pomelo

Leaf stalk (bottom) looks like true leaf



Silver fern

Silvery undersides of the leaves give this fern its name.



White clover



Three leaflets

A whitish, V-shaped band is typical in white clover leaflets.

Divided twice



LONGEST LEAF

Raffia palm leaves grow a whopping 82 ft (25 m) long—more than twice as long as a school bus.



82 ft (25 m) long

Raffia palm leaf

making them less likely to break off. Having compound leaves can also help the plants avoid being eaten. Leaflets of the **sensitive plant** quickly fold up if touched by hungry animals, while **tamarind** leaflets close up at night to appear smaller and less tasty to plant eaters.

Some compound leaves grow very quickly, which helps trees, such as the **honey locust**, harness as much sunlight as possible before losing their leaves in the fall. The **pomelo** has a rare type of compound leaf with a flat stalk that looks like a second leaf, which also helps capture sunlight.



Plants with patterns



Geranium

These light pink flowers have deeper blotches of color on the upper two petals.

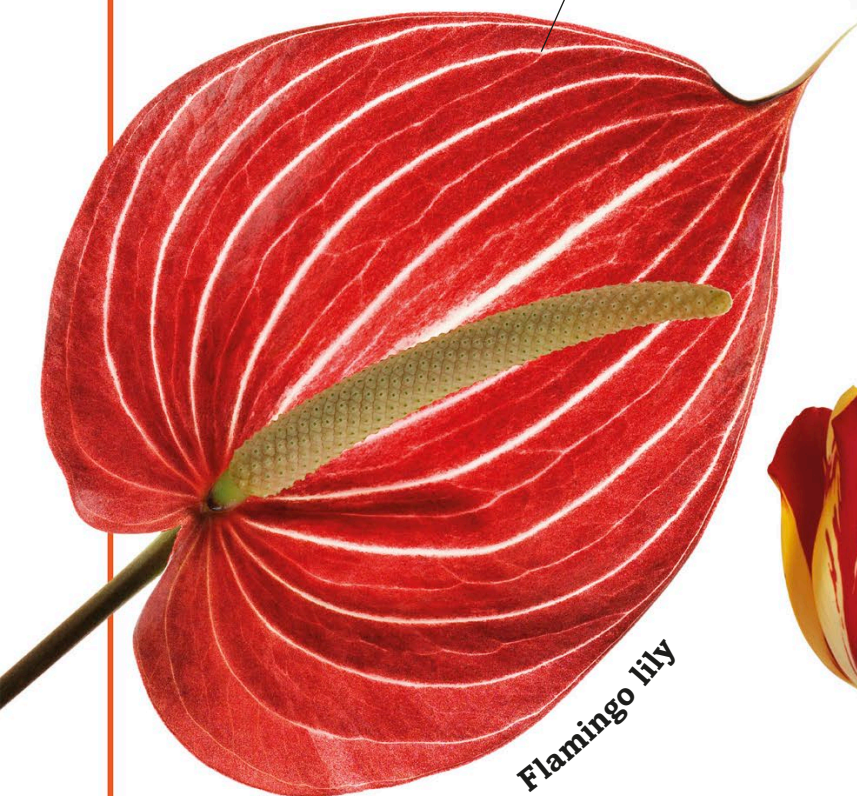


Angel wings

Areas over the veins do not make the red coloring, or pigment, so they look white.

Butterfly agave

White marks look like damage done by a leaf-mining insect.



Flamingo lily

White spots mimic water damage to protect the leaf against being eaten.

The color-breaking stripes are caused by a viral infection.



Tulip



Virginia waterleaf

Multicolored plants—also known as variegated plants—are popular with gardeners but are rare in nature. It's the green parts of the leaves that trap sunlight to harvest its energy, so white or yellow patches slow plant growth down.

Gardeners have cultivated plants with patterned leaves and flowers because they look beautiful. The outlined leaves of the **butterfly agave** and **holly** and the attractive flowers of **geranium**, **flamingo lily**, and **dahlia** are very rare



Begonia



The silvery patches can produce food, too, helping this plant grow.

Rose



White patches do not have the ability to make color.

Prayer plant



Begonias produce **seeds** so **small** they look like **dust**.

These spiky leaves are very hardy. The holly plant can grow up to 50 ft (15 m) in height.



Holly

Prayer plant leaves come in many patterns, from mosaic to striped.



Dahlia

Purple-blue flowers are marked with white spots of different sizes and resemble a starry night sky.

Only the tips of this flower make the pink pigment.



Petunia

in wild plants. In the 17th century, striped **tulip** flowers were very fashionable in the Netherlands and sold for huge amounts of money. It was later found that the delicate markings on the tulips were actually the result of a viral infection. **Angel wings** and

Virginia waterleaf are among the few plants that have naturally patterned leaves. Both have white spots on their leaves, which make them appear damaged and less appetizing. This greatly reduces the chance of insects eating their leaves.





SYMMETRICAL SWIRLS Twirl a sunflower around in your fingers and the pattern at the center of the flower head looks the same from every side. This is because the sunflower head is radially symmetrical—the florets form two sets of spirals starting at the same point somewhere in the center of the flower, before turning in opposite directions, one clockwise and the other counterclockwise.



Radial symmetry appears throughout the plant world, from daisies to pine cones. The spirals follow a pattern known as the Fibonacci sequence, named after the Italian mathematician who discovered it. In this sequence, each number is the sum of the previous two. The pattern starts 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, and so on. The reason why Fibonacci numbers are common

in nature is because this is the best way to pack the most flowers, leaves, or seeds into a tight space. A sunflower head is made up of many tiny florets—the dark rods in the picture are opened florets, while those in the center are unopened ones. Each new floret grows at an angle to the previous one, leaving no gaps and maximizing its exposure to pollinators.



Self-defense

Animals can run from their predators, but plants have no way of escaping hungry plant eaters. Instead, they have developed some clever ways of making themselves look and taste as unappealing or dangerous as possible, encouraging animals to look elsewhere for a meal. Plant defenses range from spiky thorns to toxic chemicals.



Camel thorn

Fully developed thorns may grow up to 2 1/4 in (6 cm) long.

Needlelike crystals line the blue agave's leaves, making them an unpleasant mouthful.



Silver-gray crystals

Spiky leaf edges protect these succulent leaves.



Blue agave

Tea leaves contain tannin, a bitter-tasting chemical that deters animals from eating them.



Tea

Spines on the stem protect the plant from hungry animals.



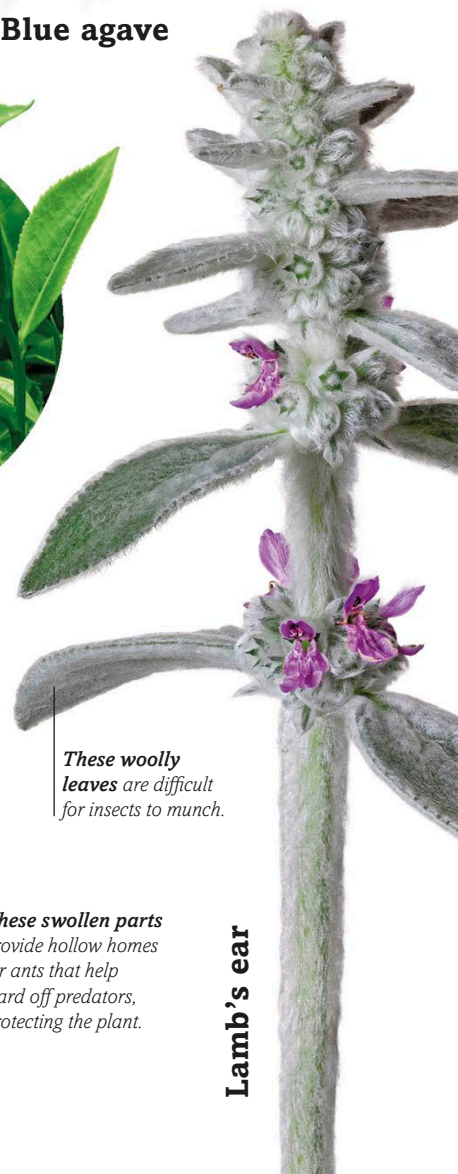
Thistle



Ant fern

These swollen parts provide hollow homes for ants that help ward off predators, protecting the plant.

These woolly leaves are difficult for insects to munch.



Lamb's ear

To deter predators, some plants, including the **camel thorn**, produce sharp branches called thorns, while others, such as **gorse**, make sharp leaves known as spines. Prickles are extensions of the stems of plants such as **roses**. Another plant defense strategy is the use of chemicals. Plants, such as **tea**, **common milkweed**, and

blue agave, produce nasty-tasting or irritating chemicals to put off any animal that takes a bite. The spots on **passion flower** leaves are a clever defense called mimicry—the plant’s leaves pretend to be infested by butterfly eggs, which deters real butterflies from looking for a “healthy” leaf.



Common milkweed

Thorns grow up to 3 in (7 cm) long.

The gummy white sap of this flowering plant is toxic to many plant-eating mammals.



Whistling thorn acacia

Ants live inside these swollen thorns, protecting the plant from herbivores.

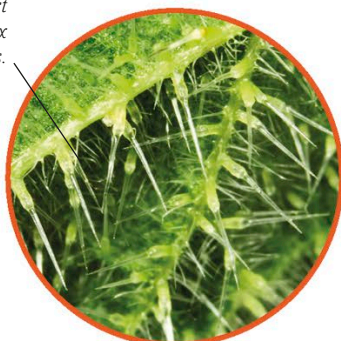
The stiff spines that cover the plant can be up to 2½ in (6.5 cm) long.

Gorse

Stems and leaves are covered in tiny stinging hairs.

Stinging nettle

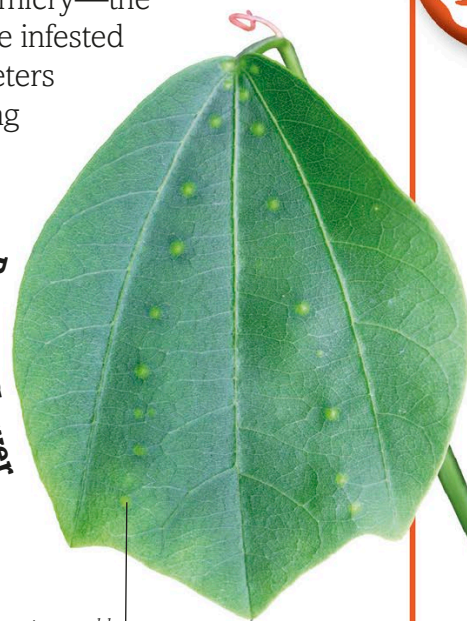
Needlelike hairs can inject a painful mix of chemicals.



Stinging hairs

Passion flower

Leaf spots resemble yellow butterfly eggs.



Small birds **nest** in spiky **gorse** bushes to protect themselves from predators.

Buds contain yellow flowers with a coconut scent.

Downward-pointing prickles grow on the stems of roses to deter predators from climbing up.

Rose





Plants and nitrogen

Plants use the energy of sunlight to turn carbon dioxide and water into the sugars they need to help them grow. To do this, they also need proteins that contain nitrogen. Although this vital gas makes up two-thirds of the air we breathe, plants cannot absorb nitrogen from the air. Instead, they rely on tiny organisms in the soil to make nitrates both from the nitrogen in the air and from the decaying remains of living things.

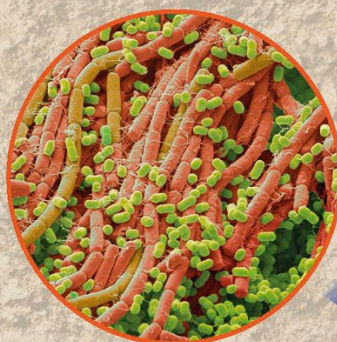
Nitrogen cycle

All plants, animals, and other living things contain nitrogen. When they die, their remains are broken down by fungi and bacteria. This eventually forms nitrates, which plants can use to make proteins that can be eaten by animals. Nitrogen is recycled continuously between the air, soil, and living things in this way—a process called the nitrogen cycle.

1 Nitrogen gas enters the soil from the air. Lightning can also change nitrogen gas into nitrates.

2 Some bacteria in the soil can change nitrogen gas into ammonia, which can be turned into nitrates. Similar bacteria, called nitrogen-fixing bacteria, live in the roots of plants such as peas.

3 Plants absorb nitrates dissolved in the water that their roots soak up from the soil. They use the nitrates to make the proteins essential for growth.



Nitrogen-fixing bacteria





Nitrogen deficiency

If a plant is short of nitrogen, it cannot make enough protein and does not grow properly. It also cannot make enough of the chlorophyll that makes its leaves green, and the edges of its leaves turn pale or even yellow.



Nitrogen-deficient grape leaf

4 Animals, such as cows, eat plants. They digest the plant proteins to make the animal proteins their bodies need.

5 Animal waste, such as dung and urine, returns nitrogen-containing compounds that can be turned into nitrates to the soil.

7 Some kinds of bacteria in the soil turn nitrates back into nitrogen gas, which is released into the air.

6 Some fungi and bacteria living in the soil feed on animal waste, or on the decaying remains of dead animals and plants. They break down nitrogen-containing compounds to release nitrates into the soil.



Decomposing fungi







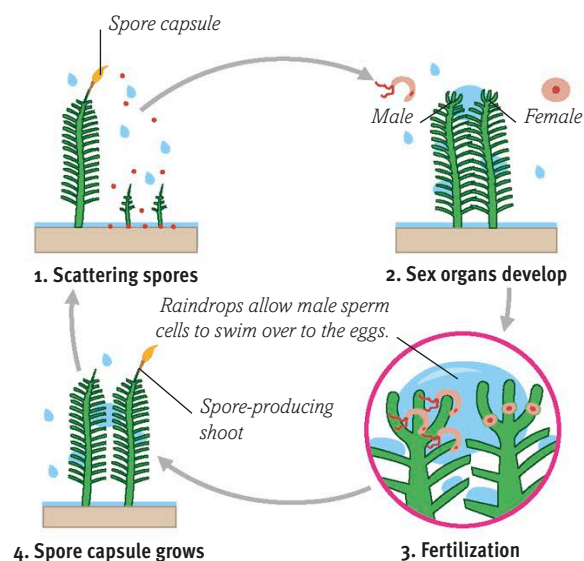
NONFLOWERING PLANTS

Nonflowering plants

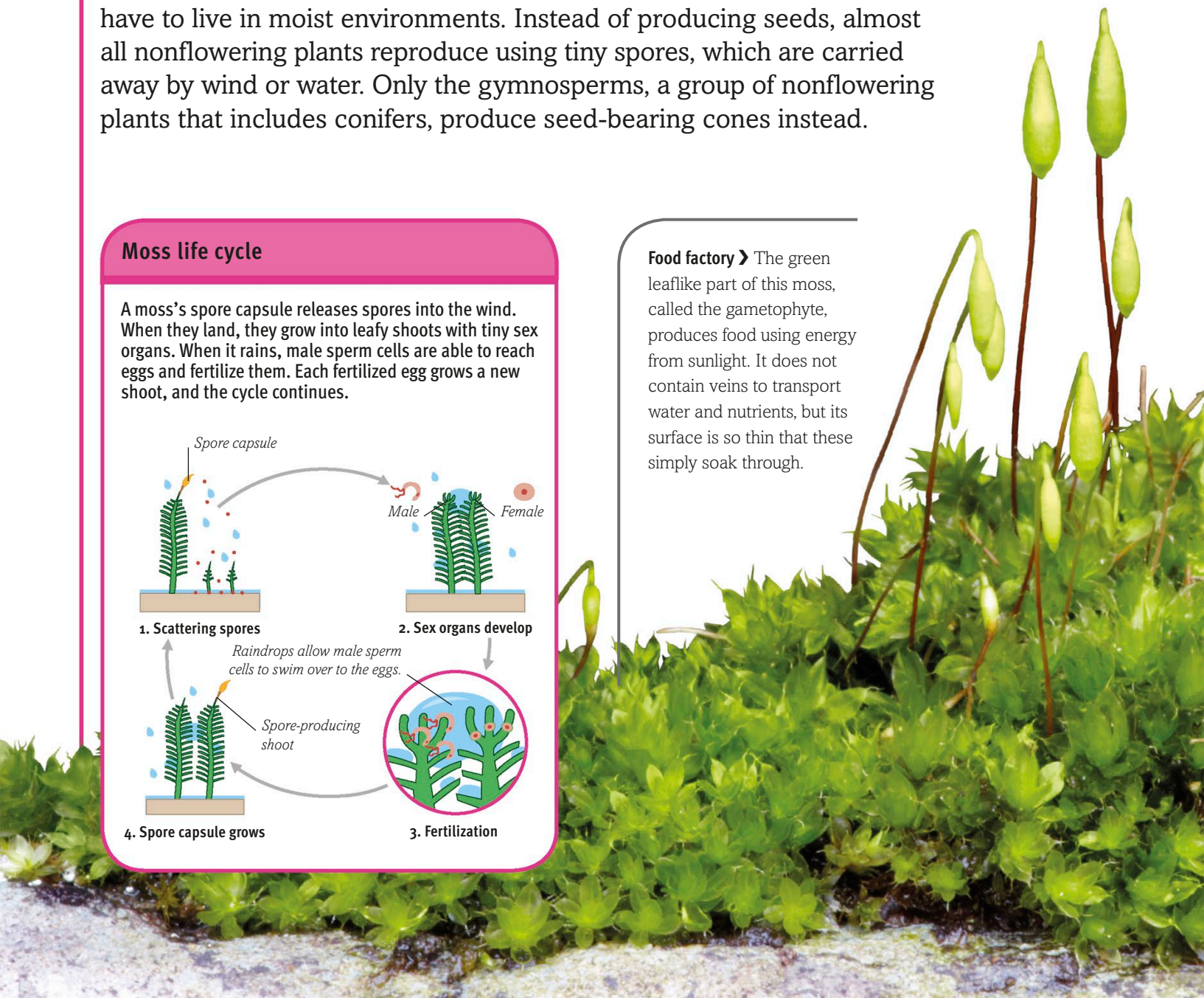
The most ancient land plants on Earth are the nonflowering plants that evolved hundreds of millions of years ago. The earliest were simple plants such as liverworts, mosses, and hornworts, which grow in damp places to avoid drying out. Ferns are more complex but still have to live in moist environments. Instead of producing seeds, almost all nonflowering plants reproduce using tiny spores, which are carried away by wind or water. Only the gymnosperms, a group of nonflowering plants that includes conifers, produce seed-bearing cones instead.

Moss life cycle

A moss's spore capsule releases spores into the wind. When they land, they grow into leafy shoots with tiny sex organs. When it rains, male sperm cells are able to reach eggs and fertilize them. Each fertilized egg grows a new shoot, and the cycle continues.



Food factory ▶ The green leaflike part of this moss, called the gametophyte, produces food using energy from sunlight. It does not contain veins to transport water and nutrients, but its surface is so thin that these simply soak through.



Capsule ➤ A spore-producing capsule forms at the tip of each threadlike sporophyte. When the spores are mature, the lid of the capsule breaks off to reveal an opening, through which the spores are released. Every capsule contains hundreds of thousands of tiny spores, which are carried off on the wind.

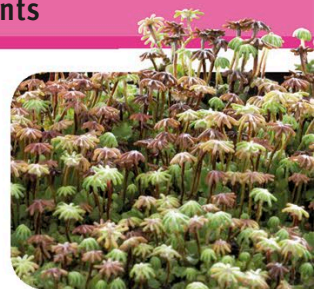
Capillary thread moss

Brown sporophytes do not make their own food, relying on the green gametophyte instead.

Nonflowering plants

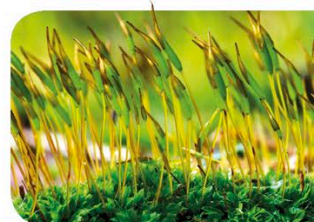
Liverwort

The first land plants were the tiny liverworts, which appeared around 470 million years ago. Around 9,000 liverwort species exist today.



Moss

Mosses grow in fluffy clumps, often in shady areas. Although they may look similar, 12,000 different types of mosses exist around the world.



Hornwort

These humidity-loving plants, which are named for their horn-shaped sporophytes, can even grow under water.



Club moss

The spore-producing brown spikes of club mosses are held on mosslike stems, but unlike mosses, the green parts are the sporophytes.



Horsetails

Horsetails have thin, hairlike leaves that run up their stems like a bottlebrush, and produce spores in conelike structures at the stem tip.



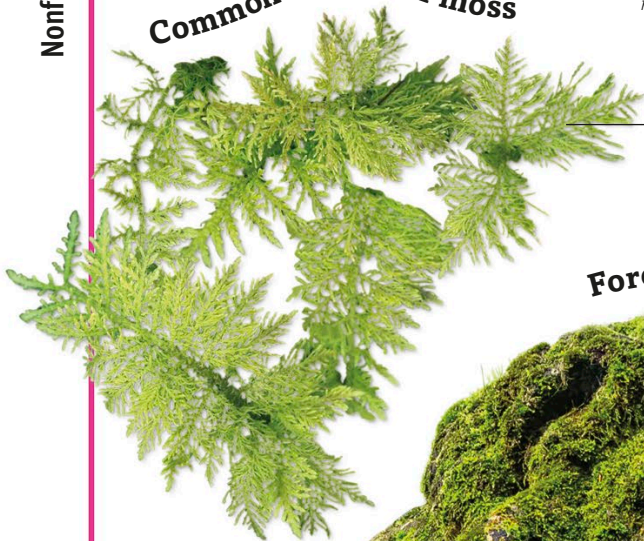
Sporophyte ➤ The spore-producing, columnlike structure rising from the green body of the moss is a sporophyte. It starts to grow when a female egg cell is fertilized by a male sperm cell.



Ancient plants

The first animals lived in a world filled with plants, but this vegetation looked different to what we see around us today. The earliest dinosaurs would not have seen flowers, and the plant eaters would have chewed mosses and horsetails instead of grasses. Many of these ancient plants have disappeared, but some continue to thrive today.

Common tamarisk moss



Star-shaped shoots range from a yellow-green to a reddish brown color.

These feathery shoots look like tiny fern fronds.

Forest star moss



Spore-producing stems grow upright, allowing the spores to fly over a greater distance.

Twisted moss



This tiny, leafy liverwort grows on damp soil.

Marsh clubmoss



Common kettlewort

Glossy shoots give this plant its name.



Glittering wood moss



Mosses absorb water and nutrients from rain and dust.





The first land plants appeared around the same time as the first insects. The earliest liverworts, relatives of the **common kettlewort** and **common liverwort**, evolved about 470 million years ago. They did not have roots, stems, or flowers but lived in damp places and simply absorbed water through their surface. Later came hornworts and mosses, many of which had more

complex, leaflike shoots, like those of the modern **tamarisk moss** and the **glittering wood moss**. Without veins to carry water and nutrients from the soil to the shoots, these plants remain small. However, club mosses and horsetails, such as the **marsh clubmoss**, **fir clubmoss**, and **meadow horsetail**, have veins running up their stems and so grow taller.



Common haircap

Sponglike moss can store huge amounts of water.



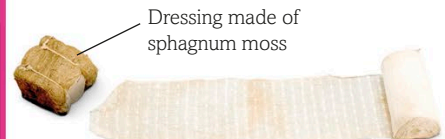
Sphagnum

This unusually tall moss can grow up to 15¾ in (40 cm).



HEALING MOSS

Sphagnum moss is absorbent and very acidic, so it prevents the growth of bacteria and fungi. During World War I (1914–1918), bandages were sometimes wrapped around sphagnum moss and used as dressings for soldiers. This stopped their wounds from becoming infected and helped them heal faster.



Dressing made of sphagnum moss

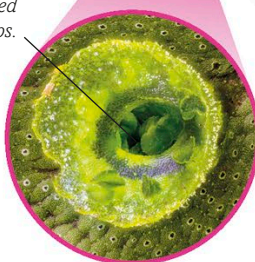
Sphagnum bandage roll

Scientists **study** the common liverwort to learn how **plants evolved**.



Common liverwort

The young plants growing inside these cups are splashed out by raindrops.



Cuplike structure

Spore-producing cones grow at the tips of fertile stems.

These tiny upright stems look like little conifers.



Fir clubmoss


Each capsule produces thousands of tiny spores.

Velvet feather-moss



Meadow horsetail





Frond ➤ Fern leaves are called fronds. These are usually divided into smaller sections, which increases the leaf's surface area so it can capture more sunlight. Fronds not only carry out photosynthesis, using the energy from sunlight to make food for the fern, but they are also important for reproduction.

Male fern

Pinna ➤ Each small segment of a fern frond growing from the central stalk, or rachis, is called a pinna.

What is a fern?

Ferns are nonflowering plants that do not produce seeds. Instead, they reproduce using tiny spores, which are carried on the wind. Fern leaves are known as fronds, and they grow from underground stems. Spores are made on the underside of fronds.

Fiddlehead ➤ New fronds develop as tightly curled spirals called fiddleheads, which unfurl as the leaf grows.

Root ➤ The roots of ferns are very similar to those of flowering plants. They absorb water and nutrients from the soil and help anchor the fern into the ground.



Sori ➤ Spores are produced in brown structures called sori on the underside of the fronds. These sori can be arranged in speckles or lines, depending on the type of fern.



Rachis ➤ The top part of the stalk is known as the rachis. It is the backbone of the frond.

Stipe ➤ The stiff stem at the bottom of the plant is known as the stipe. It is often covered with scales or hairs, for protection.

Rhizome ➤ The main stem of most ferns is known as the rhizome. It sits either on the soil's surface or just below, although in some tree ferns the stems can develop into a tall, woody trunk. The fronds of the fern emerge from the rhizome, which is often too short to be seen.

Fossilized fern

Ferns first appeared almost 360 million years ago, among mossy swamps. Some large, treelike ferns had fronds as long as $9\frac{3}{4}$ ft (3 m). The fossil below shows an extinct fern that looks very similar to modern ferns, such as the male fern.



The comblike arrangement of leaflets earns this fern its name Pecopteris—the Greek word for comb.

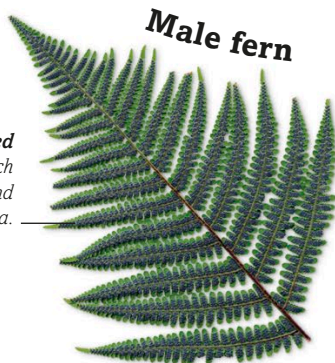
Pecopteris fern fossil

Fern fronds



Soft tree fern

This feather-shaped fern is native to much of Europe, Asia, and North America.



Male fern

Furled fronds are known as fiddleheads because they look like the scrolls of violins.



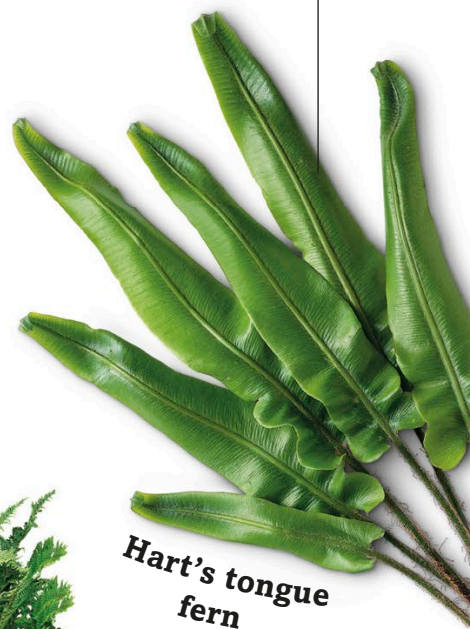
Soft shield fern

Brown, spore-producing specks on the underside are called sori.



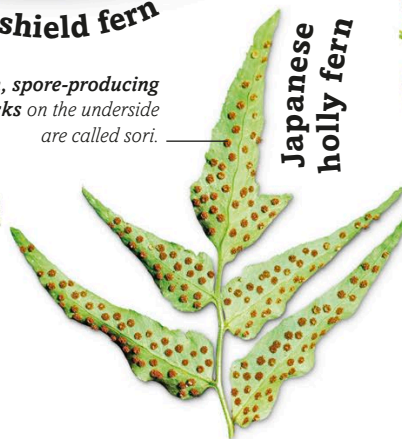
Tree-like habit

These simple fronds are said to look like deer tongues.



Hart's tongue fern

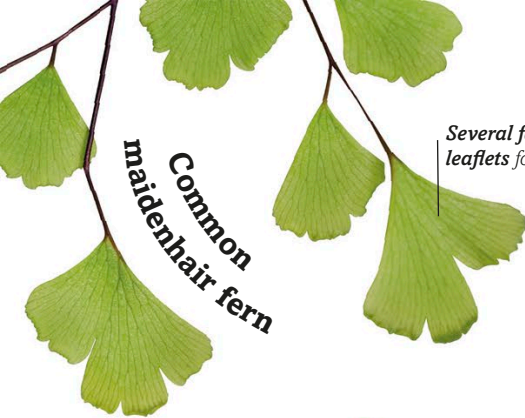
Clumps of fronds grow from a short stem at the base.



Japanese holly fern



Ferns are among the most primitive land plants. As most live on shady forest floors, they make large leaves, called fronds, to help them gather as much sunlight as possible. Many ferns share a distinctive leaf shape, with leaflets that divide, and then divide again. Ferns do not produce flowers. Instead, they grow tiny spores on the underside of their leaves, which are blown by the wind and eventually grow into new plants.



Common
maidenhair fern

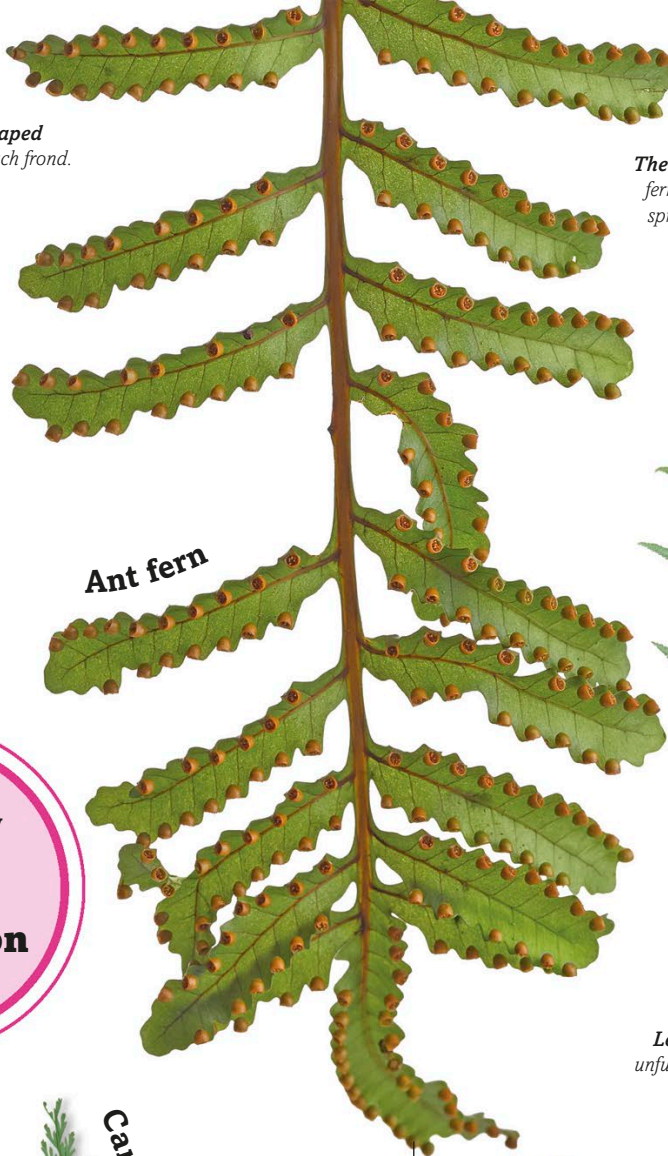
Several fan-shaped
leaflets form each frond.



Heart leaf fern

These glossy leaves
can be heart- or
arrow-shaped.

Fossil
records show
that **ferns**
date back
360 million
years.



Ant fern

Spore-producing
cups line the edges
of each frond.

The leaves of this
fern are silvery in
spring and green
in summer.



Japanese
painted fern



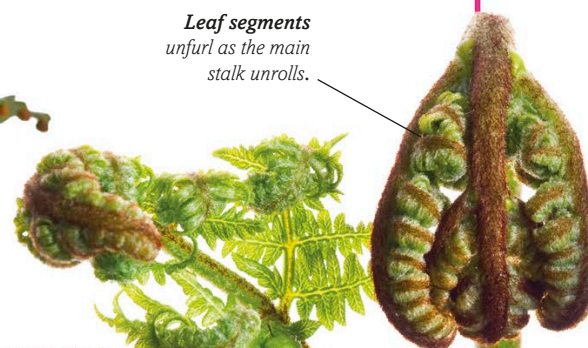
Ostrich fern

The tall clumping
leaves can unfurl to
67 in (170 cm) long.

The feathery
fronds of this
plant resemble
carrot leaves.



Carrot fern



Leaf segments
unfurl as the main
stalk unrolls.

Bracken



Tufts of bracken
thrive in open forests
and pastures.

Bracken on forest floor

There are about 10,500 known species of ferns some of which have simple undivided fronds, such as those of the **hart's tongue fern** and the **heart leaf fern**. Most are green, but a few have unusual colors, like the purple-veined, silvery leaves of the **Japanese painted fern**. In many

species, the spore-producing brown regions on the underside of fronds are arranged in distinct patterns or shapes, such as the lines of speckles on the **Japanese holly fern**. The tiny spores are usually carried away by the wind, although ants living in the hollow stems of the **ant fern** may also help this plant spread its spores.



DINOSAUR DIET Until about 140 million years ago, there were no flowering plants anywhere on Earth. Some gigantic plant-eating dinosaurs of the Jurassic period browsed in the treetops for the tough, fibrous foliage of pine trees that existed at the time. Others reached down to pluck the fronds of low-growing and nutritious ferns and horsetails.



During this time, the climate was warm and moist almost everywhere, with no polar ice. This encouraged the growth of dense forests of conifers, ginkgos, club mosses, cycads, and tree ferns that covered much of the land. Dinosaurs such as these two *Diplodocus*, which lived in what is now North America, had long, flexible necks for stretching high into

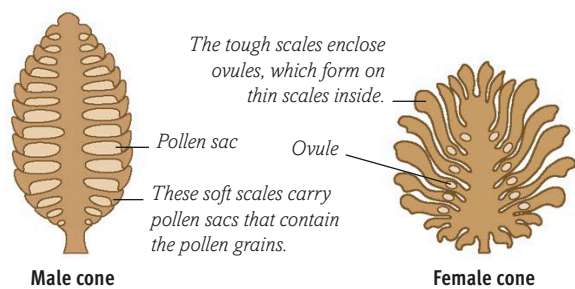
the trees to feed. They could even rear up on their hind legs for extra height. Similar to modern elephants, they also would have broken down a lot of trees, creating open areas where smaller plants such as ferns could flourish. *Diplodocus* fed on these, too, combing the stems through their peglike teeth to strip away the green foliage and gulping it down without chewing.

What is a conifer cone?

A conifer cone contains the male or female cells of conifer trees. In nonflowering plants such as pine trees, cones are the equivalent of a flower. The seeds of conifers are not contained in fruits but develop between the scales of the pollinated female cones. The scales protect the seeds until they are fully developed, then open up to release their seeds.

Closed cone scales ➤ The female cones contain ovules (clusters of female cells) that will develop into seeds if they are fertilized by pollen. Blown on the wind, the pollen grains are small enough to slip between the scales and enter each ovule.

Male and female cones



Most conifer trees have separate male and female cones. The long, soft male cones produce pollen, while the woody female cones contain ovules that will become seeds when fertilized. The pollen grains are tiny, like dust, so they are easily blown on the wind.



Closed Austrian pine cone



Other cone-bearing trees



Cycads Sometimes living for 1,000 years, these slow-growing, palmlike plants develop structures called strobili, which are similar to conifer cones.



Welwitschia Found only in the Namib Desert in Africa, these plants are either male or female. Although not true conifers, the females have seed-bearing cones.



Ginkgo These trees are either male or female. The males have pollen-bearing cones, but the females produce seeds that swell up to look like the fruits of flowering trees.

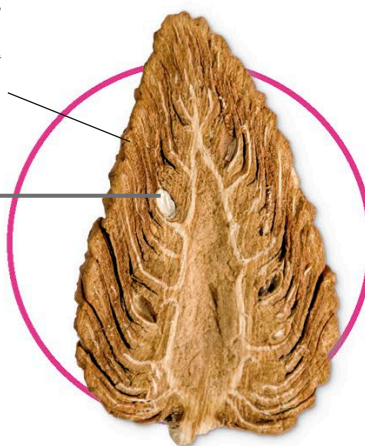


Open Austrian pine cone

Open cone scales > When the seeds inside a cone are ready, dry weather triggers the cones to open up or even fall off the tree, so the wind can blow the seeds away.

Tough, woody scales grow all around the cone. They open slightly to allow fertilization and then close again to protect the developing seeds.

Cross section of a female cone

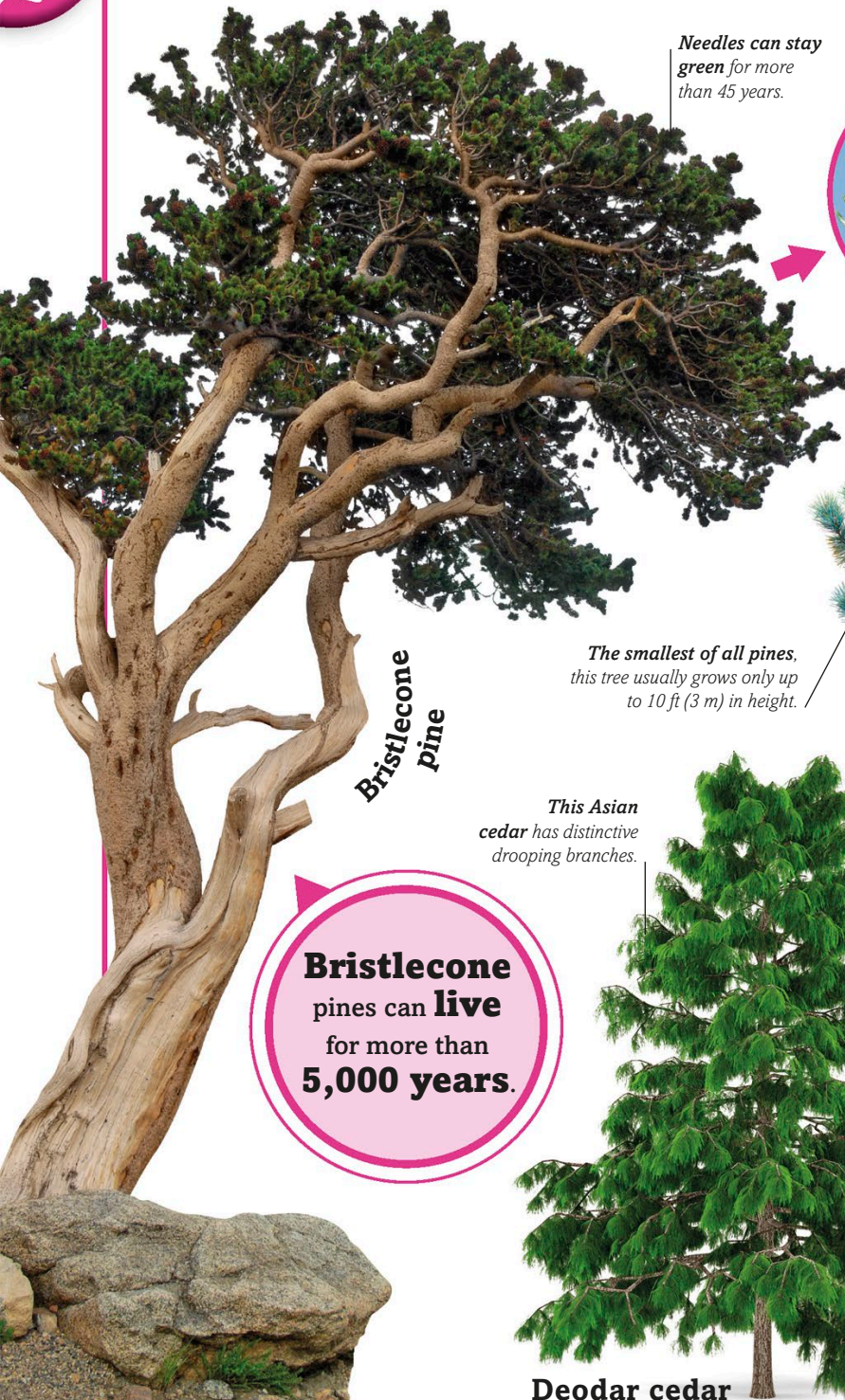


Seed > Conifer seeds can take up to two years to mature. They are attached to thin scales that act like wings, allowing the seeds to be carried away in the wind when the time is right.



Winged seed

Pines and needles



**Bristlecone
pine**

Bristlecone
pines can **live**
for more than
5,000 years.

*Needles can stay
green for more
than 45 years.*



Tufts of needles

*Cedar needles contain
oils used in perfumes
and colognes.*



**Siberian
dwarf pine**

*The smallest of all pines,
this tree usually grows only up
to 10 ft (3 m) in height.*



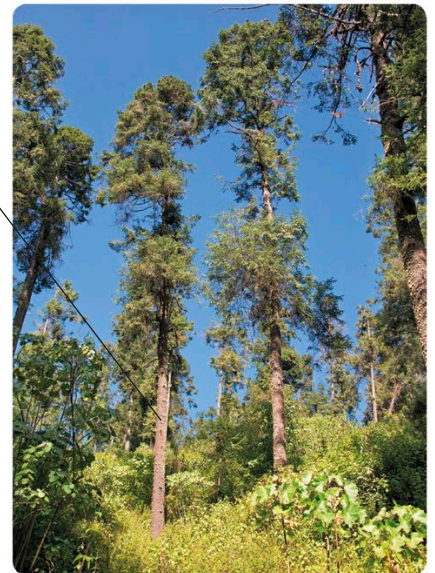
Atlas cedar

*This Asian
cedar has distinctive
drooping branches.*



Deodar cedar

*This tree gets
its name from the
use of its foliage
during Christmas
in Mexico.*



Sacred fir

The pine family contains more than 200 types of conifer trees, including pines, firs, spruces, larches, and cedars. Although they may look similar, these cone-bearing trees have distinct patterns of needlelike leaves that can be used to tell them apart.

The needles of pines, including those of the **bristlecone pine** and **sugar pine**, grow in clusters of two to five—each cluster from a single bud. Cedar needles, such as those of the **Lebanon cedar**, also grow in clusters, but these may contain 15–45 needles and are typically



European silver fir

Young silver fir trees are often used as Christmas trees in Europe.



Blue spruce

Sharply pointed needles

This slow-growing but resilient tree has a life span of 150–600 years.



Needles grow in bunches of five and can be 4 in (11 cm) long.



Tamarack larch

Short needles turn golden yellow and orange in fall.

This wide-spreading tree can reach up to 130 ft (40 m) in height. It is the national emblem of Lebanon and appears on its flag.



Lebanon cedar



Whorls of needles



Sitka spruce

This tall tree can grow rapidly, reaching more than 310 ft (95 m) in height.



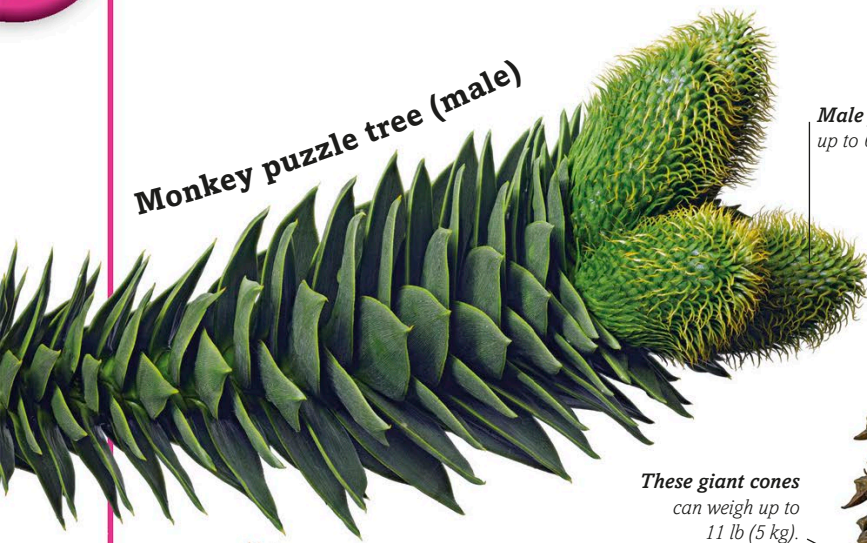
Sugar pine

shorter than pine needles. Firs, such as the **European silver fir**, have flat needles that grow individually from the branch. Spruces, including the **blue spruce** and the **sitka spruce**, have sharp four-sided needles. Larch needles are particularly unusual because,

unlike most conifers, they are not evergreen but deciduous. In fall, the light blue-green needles of the **tamarack larch** change color before falling off, turning the wooded mountains glorious golden colors.

Conifer cones

Monkey puzzle tree (male)



Male pollen cones grow up to 6 in (15 cm) in length.

Tightly closed woody cones face down on branches.



Lodgepole pine

These giant cones can weigh up to 11 lb (5 kg).



Coulter pine

Red female cones sometimes grow 20 in (50 cm) long.



Zululand cycad

Female cones produce seeds about 18 months after pollination.



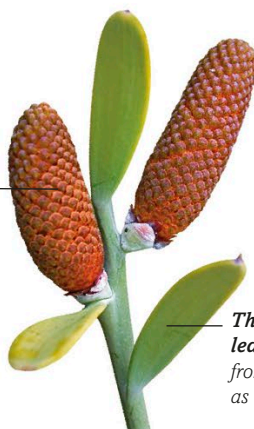
Wollemi pine (female)

Young red cones turn brown before releasing seeds.



European larch

Male cones can take up to a year to ripen, turn brown, and release pollen.



Kauri (male)

Thick, leathery leaves change color from bronze to green as they mature.



Common juniper



Each of these small yellow cones produces a single seed.

Outeniqua yellowwood

Round, green cones turn purple when ripe.



Conifer trees bear cones instead of flowers. All conifers have separate male and female cones, which sometimes grow on different trees. Male cones make pollen, while female cones, when pollinated, produce seeds. Cones come in many shapes, sizes, and colors, but all are pollinated by wind.

Conifers have a few tricks for dispersing their seeds. Some, such as the **Outeniqua yellowwood** and **common juniper**, make fleshy, berrylike cones. Birds eat the cones and spread the seeds in their droppings. Other conifers need specific conditions for seed dispersal.



Sugar pine (wet)



Scales open in dry conditions to release winged seeds up to 1½ in (4 cm) long.



Sugar pine (dry)

The pink female cones of this spruce are 6 in (15 cm) tall and the largest of the spruces.



Norway spruce (female)

Colorful pollen cones are only ¼ in (2 cm) long.



Pitch pine (male)



Atlas cedar (male)

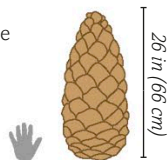
This soft-scaled cone grows up to 3 in (8 cm) long.

The female cones of the **kauri** break apart and release seeds when mature, while **lodgepole pine** cones do not open until they feel the strong heat of a fire. The female cones of the **sugar pine** open only in dry weather, so their light seeds are blown far and wide without moisture in the air weighing them down.



CONE SIZE

The sugar pine grows the world's longest conifer cones—more than four times longer than a human hand.



Green cones produce bright orange seeds.



Pineapple zamia

These blue female cones stand upright on top of branches.



Korean fir





FLOWERING PLANTS

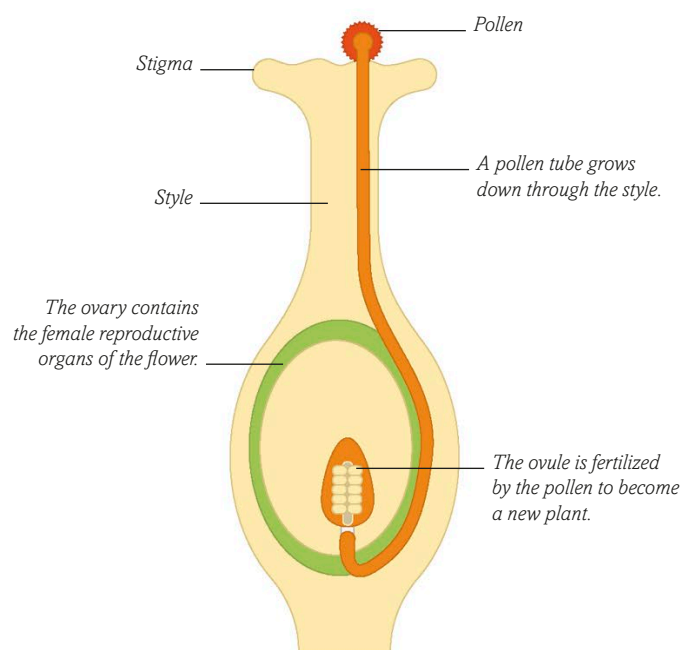




What is a flower?

Many plants rely on animals, such as bees and hummingbirds, to help them reproduce. To attract these animals, many plants have flowers that are brightly colored, have a sweet scent, and produce a sugary nectar for them to eat. When the animal visits the flower to find the nectar, it becomes covered in pollen. The animal, known as a pollinator, then transports the pollen to another flower.

Fertilization



When pollen lands on a flower's stigma, it grows a tiny tube that travels through the style, taking the male pollen cells to the ovary. The male cells join with female cells, in the ovules, which become the seeds. This process is called fertilization.

Stigma ➤ This is the female part of the flower and has either a sticky tip or fine hairs to trap pollen.

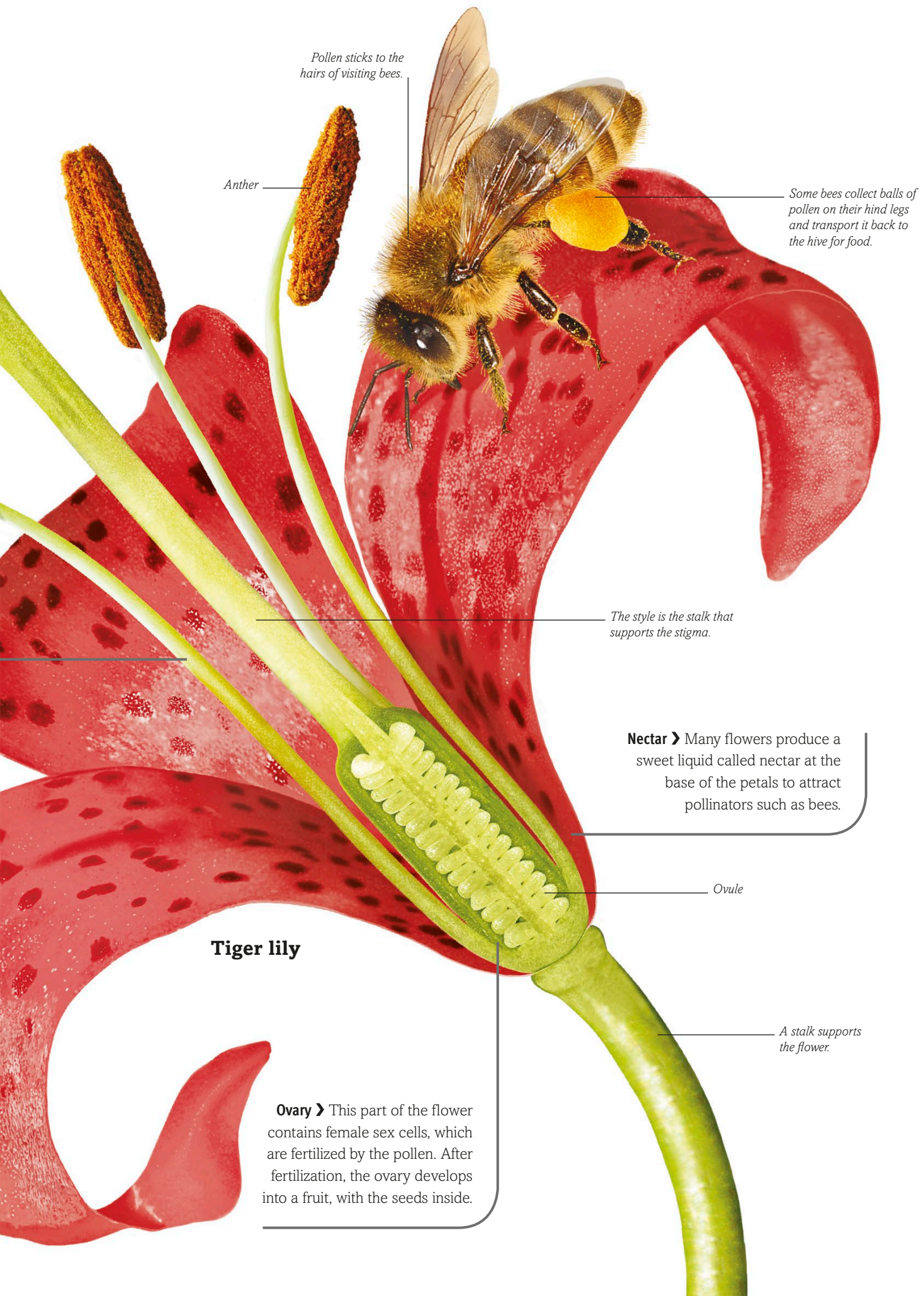
Pollen ➤ The fine yellow grains of pollen, found on a tubular structure called an anther, contain the plant's male sex cells.

Stamen ➤ Each stamen has a long filament with an anther on the top where the pollen is produced.

Petals ➤ Colorful, often scented, petals attract pollinating animals to the flower. Petals come in all shapes and sizes and often look brighter to insect eyes than to human eyes.

Pollination

A tiger lily has colorful petals and sugary nectar for animals such as this bee to eat. As it feeds, the bee brushes against the pollen, which sticks to its body. Pollen contains male cells. When the bee visits another tiger lily, the pollen will brush onto the new flower's stigma, and grow towards the female cells. This is called pollination.



Anther

Pollen sticks to the hairs of visiting bees.

Some bees collect balls of pollen on their hind legs and transport it back to the hive for food.

The style is the stalk that supports the stigma.

Nectar > Many flowers produce a sweet liquid called nectar at the base of the petals to attract pollinators such as bees.

Ovule

A stalk supports the flower.

Tiger lily

Ovary > This part of the flower contains female sex cells, which are fertilized by the pollen. After fertilization, the ovary develops into a fruit, with the seeds inside.



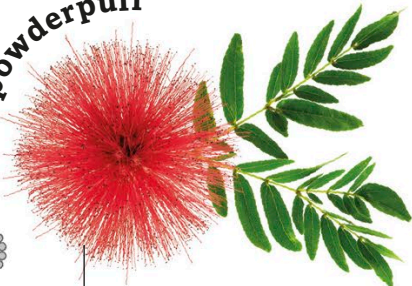
Flower forms

Flowering plants

Red powderpuff



Spherical



Red stamens make the flower look like a fluffy pompom.

Frangipani



Rotate

The sweet-smelling frangipani is used to make flower necklaces in Hawaii.

Bird-of-paradise

Orange and purple flowers attract sunbirds, which stand on the thick green perch to access the sweet nectar.

Foxglove

The flower buds at the top open last.

Spots inside the foxglove flowers guide bees to the nectar.



Irregular

Pale yellow flowers bloom all over Europe during spring.

Primrose



Bell-shaped



Flat-topped tube

Wax plant

A green, beaklike bract protects the flowers.

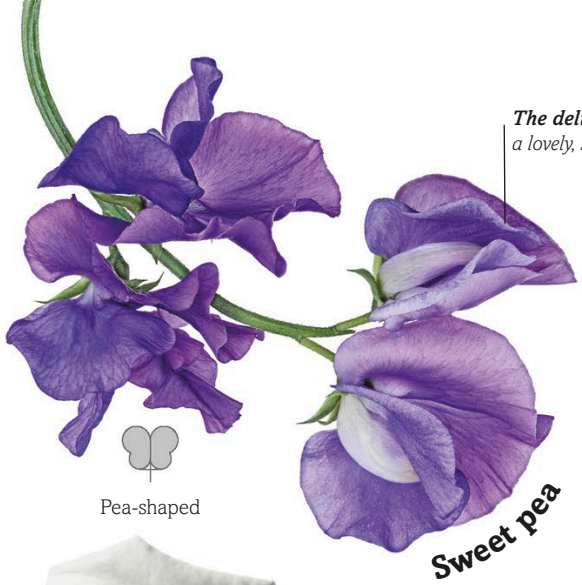
Thick, waxy petals can withstand tropical storms.



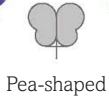
Star-shaped

Plants have flowers that come in a variety of sizes and colors. Botanists (plant scientists) study a flower's shape to better understand how it may be pollinated, by bees, bats, birds, or a breeze!

Some plants, such as **primrose**, **frangipani**, and **poppy**, have simple, open flower shapes that are perfect for a quick visit from an insect. Others make dense clusters of flowers called inflorescences to provide more of a meal for pollinators. For example, the **red powderpuff**

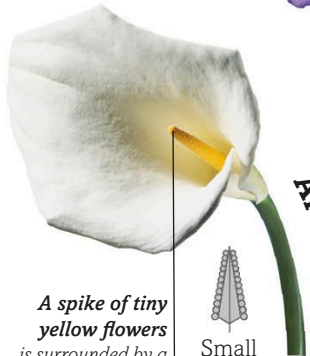


The delicate flower has a lovely, sweet fragrance.



Pea-shaped

Sweet pea



A spike of tiny yellow flowers is surrounded by a white, petal-like bract.

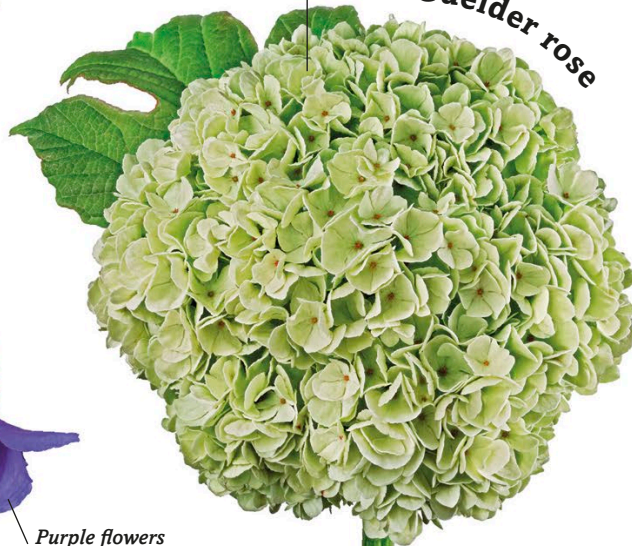


Small flowers on spike

Arum lily

Small flowers fill the center of these massive blooms, which can grow up to 12 in (30 cm) across.

Cream-colored flower spikes are up to 4 in (11 cm) across.



Guelder rose



King protea



Composite



Pink quill

Purple flowers grow from the edges of the pink bracts.



Funnel-shaped

The stem of the guelder rose is smooth, not thorny like a true rose plant.

Four large petals form a cup shape.



Poppy



Cup-shaped

A hairy bud protects the growing flower.



Saucer-shaped



Red hot poker

Tube-shaped

The petals change color from orange to yellow as they open.

makes a ball of tiny stamens to attract bees and butterflies, while the **king protea** and **red hot poker** coat the faces of visiting birds with a dusting of pollen when they feed. The **bird-of-paradise** also provides a feast for visiting birds, covering their feet with pollen

as they perch on the flower. Other plants make a special, often colorful, petal-like leaf called a bract, to attract many pollinators. Hummingbirds are drawn to the showy bracts of the **pink quill**, while the white bract of the **arum lily** attracts many insects.

Pollinators

This day-flying moth uses its strawlike mouthpart—which is about as long as its body—to drink nectar from flowers of many shapes and sizes.

The long beak
reaches into the flower,
and the bird's head is
dusted with pollen.

Hummingbird hawk-moth

- **The tiny wings** of the hummingbird can flap many times in a second, allowing the bird to hover in one place as it feeds.

Violet sabrewing hummingbird

The waxy bract of the banana flower bud curves back to give birds easy access to the flower inside.

**Bell-shaped,
yellow flowers**
*remain closed
unless forced open
by a pollinator.*

The possum's excellent climbing skills help it run up and down flowering trees.

Pygmy possum

Bumblebee

As the bumblebee opens up the flower and scrambles inside to get to the nectar, its fuzzy hairs collect pollen.

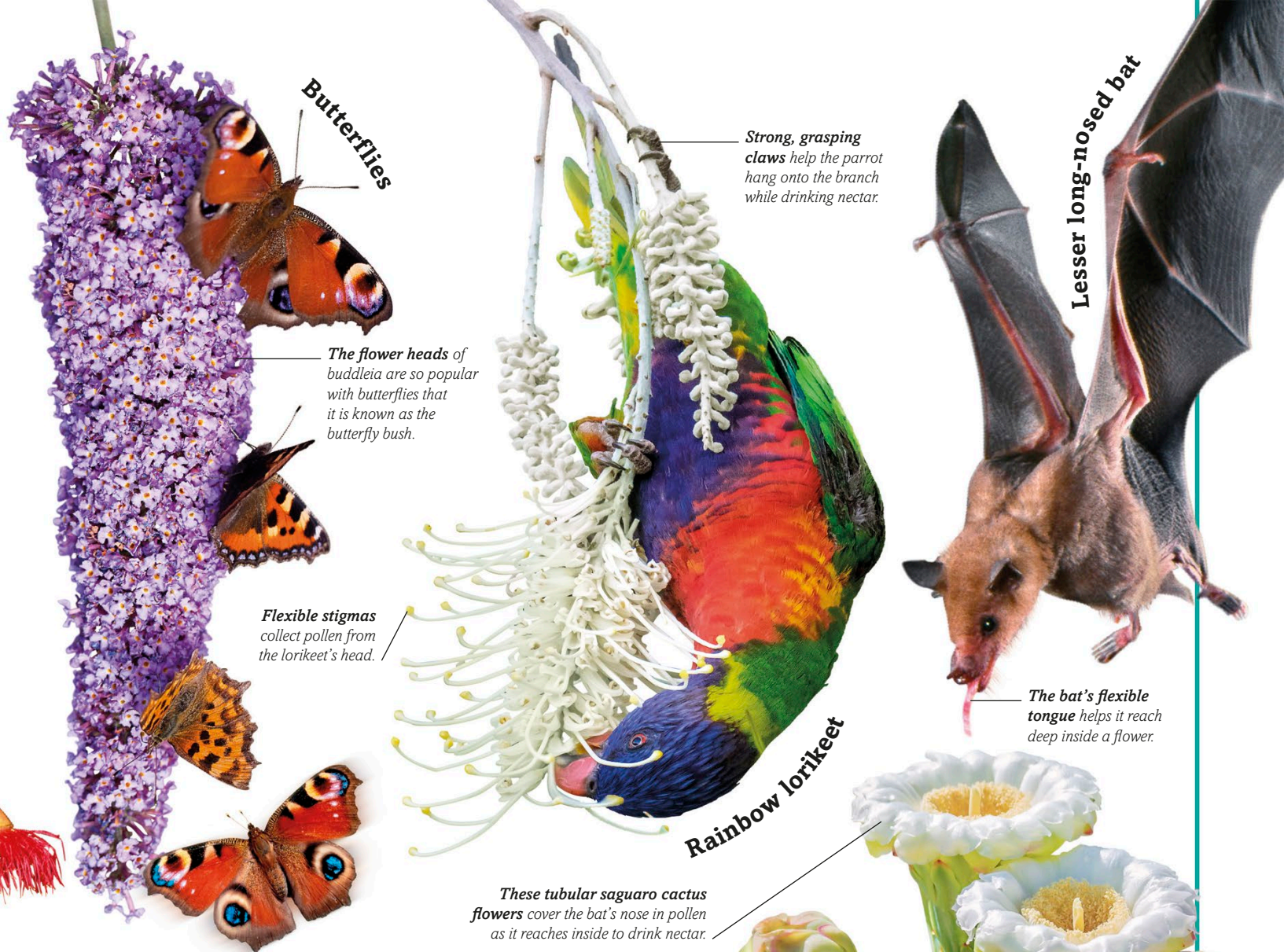
Ladybug

Beetle-pollinated flowers make a lot of pollen that stick to these clumsy insects.

This eucalyptus tree flowers in winter, relying on mammals for pollination at a time when insects are scarce.

Although insects are the most common pollinators, larger animals such as birds and bats also play a vital role in pollination. In return, plants provide sweet nectar. Different flower shapes, colors, and smells attract specific pollinators.

Bees and **butterflies** visit fragrant, brightly colored flowers, which grow in clusters or have large petals for the insects to land on. Many **moths** prefer white or very pale flowers that open at night, following their sweet floral scents to find them in the dark. Beetles, such



Butterflies

The flower heads of buddleia are so popular with butterflies that it is known as the butterfly bush.

Flexible stigmas collect pollen from the lorikeet's head.

Strong, grasping claws help the parrot hang onto the branch while drinking nectar.

Lesser long-nosed bat

The bat's flexible tongue helps it reach deep inside a flower.

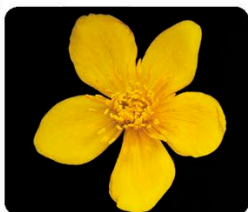
Rainbow lorikeet

These tubular saguaro cactus flowers cover the bat's nose in pollen as it reaches inside to drink nectar.



NECTAR GUIDES

Unlike humans, bees can see ultraviolet (UV) light. Many flowers, such as this marsh marigold, may appear plain to us, but under UV light, we can see how the petals have dark patterns that guide insects to their nectar and pollen.



Under normal light



Under UV light

More than **500 species** of plants are **pollinated by bats**.

as **ladybugs**, also pollinate pale-colored flowers but choose fruity-smelling blooms. These flowers mimic the scent of ripe fruit to trick beetles into visiting them for food. Of the larger pollinators, birds are attracted to bright, day-flowering blossoms. **Hummingbirds** favor reddish flowers,

but these tend not to be scented, since birds do not have a sense of smell. The petals of bird-pollinated flowers are usually bent back to allow the animals easy access. **Bats** pollinate some night-flowering plants and are attracted to large, pale flowers with a musty smell.



Looks familiar



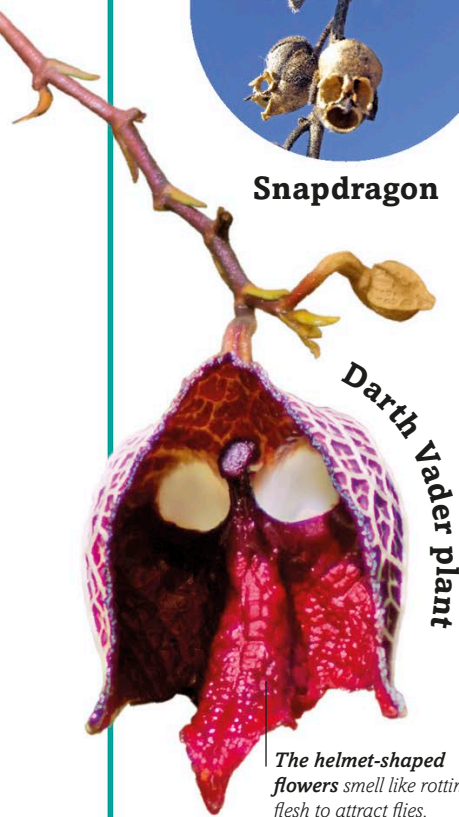
The bright pink outer petals resemble love hearts.

Asian bleeding heart



Skull-shaped seed pods appear after flowering.

Snapdragon



Darth Vader plant

The helmet-shaped flowers smell like rotting flesh to attract flies.



Naked man orchid

The purple flowers look like little people, complete with arms and legs.



Indian pipe

These ghostly white parasitic plants grow into the roots of trees to steal food.



Parrot flower

The showy flowers look like flying parrots with little green "beaks."

Two red petals fan out like a pair of ears from the purple, bat-faced center.



Bat-faced cuphea

These fun flowers look like animals and other objects, from birds to love hearts. While most of these similarities are only a coincidence, in some cases, the resemblance has evolved to attract potential pollinators.

Many of the unique and colorful flowers shown here belong to the orchid family, which consists of thousands of different plants. This includes the **naked man orchid**, the **dancing lady orchid**, and the **white egret flower**. The **bee orchid** flower, which looks like a female bee, attracts

A
bee orchid's
fragrance can
trick a male bee
into thinking it
is meeting a
female.

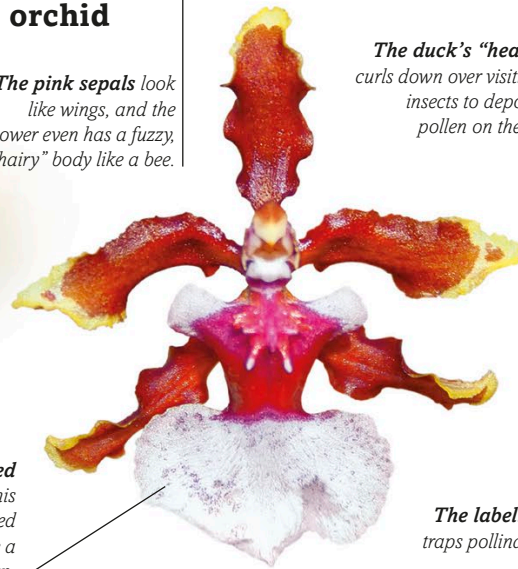
*These masses of pollen
stick to the bee's head, to be
transferred to the next flower.*



Bee orchid

*The pink sepals look
like wings, and the
flower even has a fuzzy,
"hairy" body like a bee.*

*The large, ruffled
petal of this
chocolate-scented
flower looks like a
dancer's gown.*



Dancing lady orchid

*The delicate white
petals resemble the
outstretched wings of
a heronlike white bird
called an egret.*



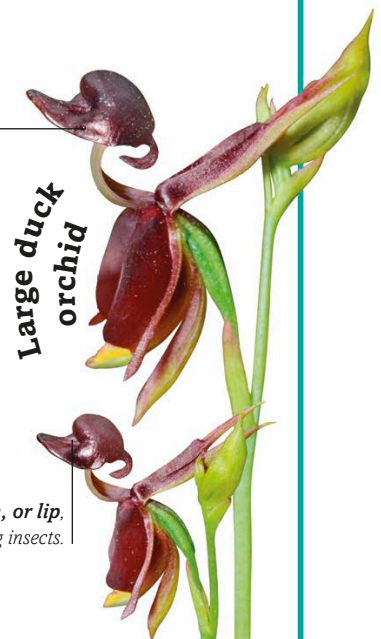
White egret flower

*The red leaflike bracts
attract hummingbirds
to pollinate the
flowers inside.*



Hot lips

*The duck's "head"
curls down over visiting
insects to deposit
pollen on them.*



Large duck orchid

*The labellum, or lip,
traps pollinating insects.*

male bees, attaching packages of pollen to them in the process. The **large duck orchid** looks more like a female sawfly than a duck to male sawflies, luring these pollinators. While many of these eye-catching plants are popular with gardeners, too great a market

demand can place a strain on rarer species. For this reason, the government of Thailand has banned the export of the rare **parrot flower** plant and its seeds to protect its dwindling numbers in the wild.

Looks familiar



RIVER OF BLOSSOM A bird's-eye view of Inokashira Park in Tokyo, Japan, reveals the waters of the pond running through it are pink with the petals of the spectacular cherry trees that line its banks. Families and friends take picnics to the park and sit beneath the trees to eat, drink, listen to music, and enjoy the beauty of the blossoms. Later, lanterns hung in the branches are lit, and festivities carry on into the night.



At the start of every year, the Japanese weather office monitors the temperature and conditions to try to predict when the cherry trees, called *sakura*, will bloom. The trees blossom first in the warmer south of Japan, and the “blossom front” spreads up the country, moving north as spring advances. The blossom forecasts are important

because thousands of people celebrate flower-viewing parties, a Japanese tradition, known as *hanami*, that dates back to the 8th century. The trees will carry their blossoms for only a week or two, and people need to plan their festivities. In Japanese culture, the cherry tree’s short-lived bloom is often associated with the fragility of human life.



A garden of roses

A line of rose-covered arches in a beautiful garden in Baden-Baden, Germany.



Rose garden

Seeds inside the rose hip are eaten by birds attracted by the red fruit and spread in their droppings.



Dog rose hips

Fruits called hips develop once the flower has been fertilized and the petals fall off.

This climbing rose is native to China.



Banks' rose

The crimson rose becomes more fragrant in the warmth of the sun.



Munstead wood

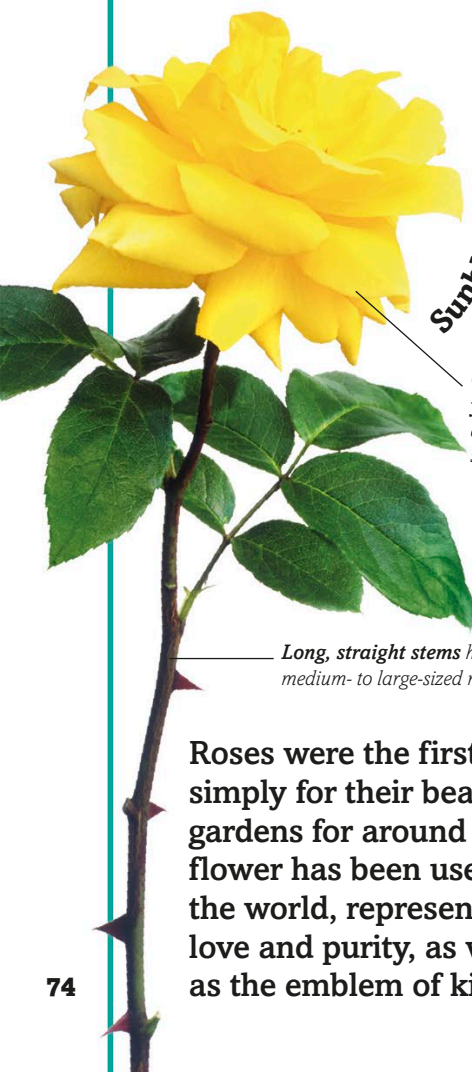
This full blooming variety was bred from five-petaled wild roses.



Chinese rose

Sunblest rose

Cupped golden yellow petals are mildly scented.



Long, straight stems hold these medium- to large-sized roses upright.



SPACE ROSE

In 1998, researchers sent the miniature rose they called "Overnight Scentsation" into space, aboard NASA's Space Shuttle *Discovery*. The purpose was to study the effect of low gravity on the oils released from the rose's petals. After 10 days, they discovered that the rose had produced an entirely new scent, unlike any rose scent found on Earth.



Roses were the first plants to be grown simply for their beauty and have graced gardens for around 5,000 years. The rose flower has been used as a symbol across the world, representing ideas such as love and purity, as well as adopted as the emblem of kings and countries.

Almost all wild roses have five overlapping petals and are known as "single" blooms. Over the centuries, gardeners have taken species of wild roses, particularly the **Chinese rose**, and cultivated them to get flowers with three or more layers of petals, known as "double" blooms, such as the



Making rose oil, Bulgaria

This multilayered rose variety cost \$4 million to develop.

Rose petals must be steamed with water, the same day they are picked, to extract the perfumed oil.



Juliet rose

This pale pink rose is prized for its smell.



Musk rose



Rosa Mundi

This striped pink flower was cultivated more than 400 years ago.

Pale pink flowers bloom from dark pink buds.



Dog rose

Some
rose prickles
can be made into
fishing hooks.

Leaflike sepals protect the growing bud.



Iceberg rose

Iceberg was voted the "world's favorite rose" in 1983.



Crimson glory

This deep red rose may have as many as 26–40 petals and is very fragrant.

Banks' rose and **iceberg rose**. Some modern varieties, including the **Juliet rose** and **crimson glory**, have more than 25 petals and are called "full" blooms. Rose breeders have been able to create white, yellow, orange, pink, and red roses, but never a truly blue one. Rose petals contain oils with a

wonderful fragrance used in perfumes and many other beauty products, while rose water is used to flavor sweets such as Turkish delight. Some roses, such as the **dog rose**, bear glossy, seed-bearing fruits called rose hips in fall. Rich in vitamin C, these can be used in teas, preserves, and medicines.



Crazy for daisies

With nearly 25,000 species, daisies make up one of the largest plant families. But their pretty flower heads are not quite what they seem. What looks like one flower is in fact a cluster of lots—sometimes thousands—of tiny flowers in the center, with a ring of what looks like petals but is in fact more flowers around the edge.



Coneflower

Pink petals surround a spiny conelike center that is full of nectar.



Treasure flower

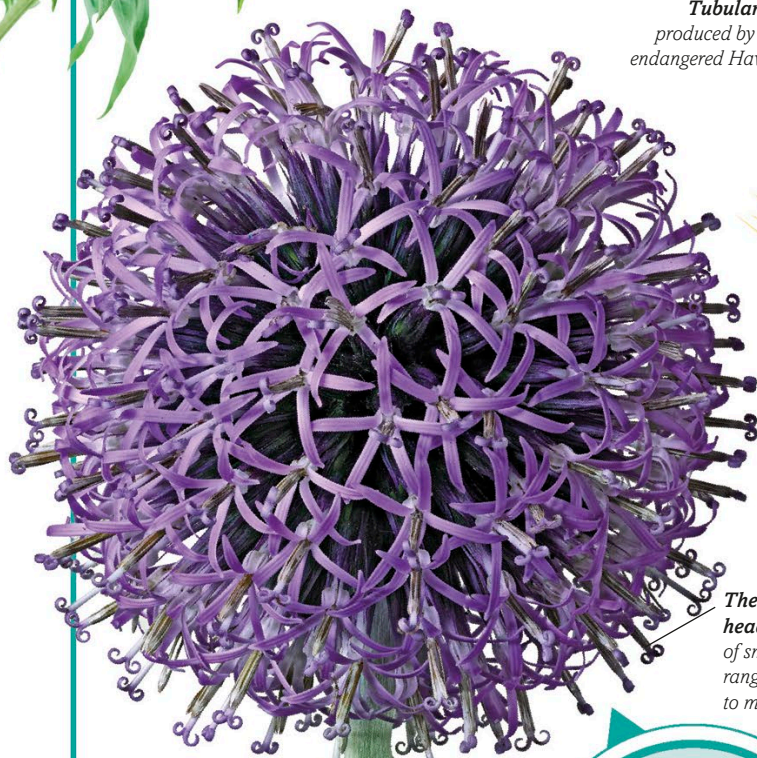
The striped ray florets surround a center of tiny disk florets.

Orange pom-poms are made of individual flowers and colorful hairs.



Stiffia

Tubular flowers are produced by this critically endangered Hawaiian plant.



Globe thistle



Maui island-aster

Yellow-tipped red florets, which look like flames, give this plant the name "firewheel."

Blanket flower



The round flower head is made up of small flowers, ranging from purple to metallic-blue.

The spiky **globe thistle** is also called the **blue hedgehog**.



Whorl flower

Three separate florets look like a single flower.



Daisies such as the **treasure flower**, the **common daisy**, and **chicory** have large outer petal-like ray florets, surrounding the disk florets in the center. Each disk floret is in fact five fused petals that form a tubelike flower, which you can see clearly in the **whorl flower**. The **sunflower** has a large head so you can make out the individual disk florets as they bloom, from the outside in.

Each floret produces one seed. The flower-packed heads of daisies make them much more attractive to insects and makes pollination a lot easier. Most have bright colors to attract insect pollinators, such as bees, but the tropical **Mutisia** flower is pollinated by birds. The other tropical daisies, **stiffia** and the **Maui island-aster**, are unusual because they grow on trees.

The largest sunflower head ever grown was in 1983, at 32 1/4 in (82 cm) across.

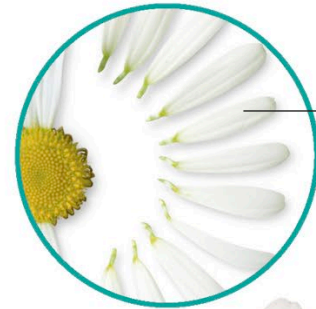


Sunflower



Mutisia

The orange ray florets attract bird pollinators.



Each petal-like ray floret is a lopsided flower.

Yellow disk florets at the center produce pollen and make seeds.



Common daisy



Edible blue flowers, which are bitter in taste, can be eaten in salads.

Chicory

The purple florets fade to cream toward the center of the flower head.



Persian cornflower



Ingenious orchids

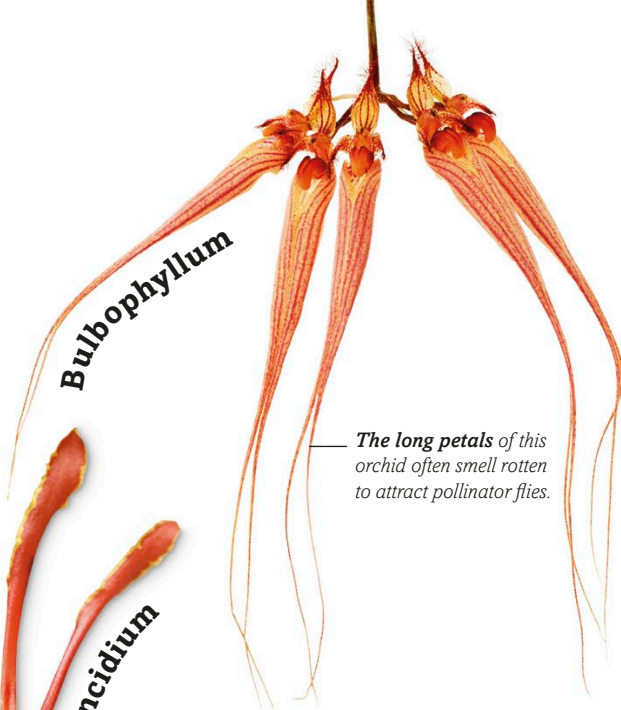
Moth orchid



These decorative petals can be red, white, yellow, or pink.

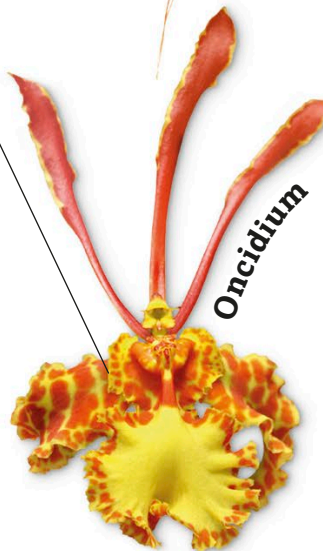
Large, long-lived flowers make this orchid a popular houseplant.

Bulbophyllum



The long petals of this orchid often smell rotten to attract pollinator flies.

Oncidium



These unusual speckled flowers bloom for two to three months in a year.

One colorful petal is the focus of these unusual flowers.

Red cross orchid



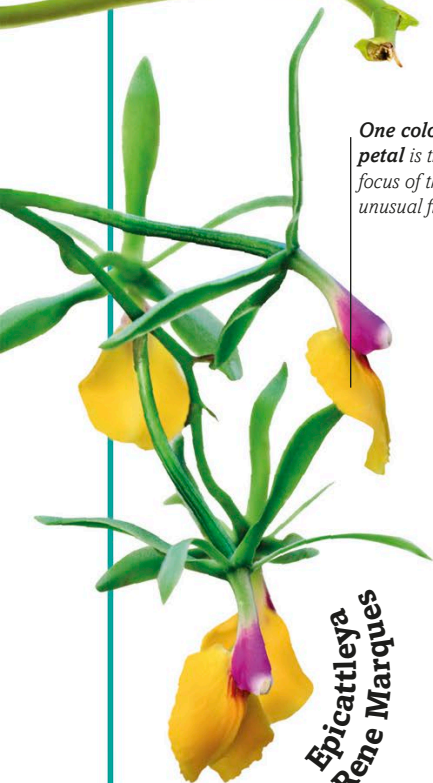
Cross-shaped lip petals give this orchid its name.

Large petal acts as a landing platform for insects.

Zygopetalum



**Epicattleya
Rene Marques**



Orchids are beautiful flowers with clever tactics for attracting pollinators. Some mimic male insects, so rival males will attack them and get covered in pollen. Others attract male insects by looking like females. Some flowers entice bees and butterflies with a sweet smell, while others stink of rotting meat to draw flies.

Orchids are found almost everywhere in the world but are most common in the tropics where, like the **vanda** orchid, they live high in the rain forest trees. In cooler climates orchids usually grow on the ground. All orchids have three outer sepals and three inner petals, including a distinctive lip petal that acts as a landing

Slipper orchid



Stanhopea

These flowers blossom for only three days so have a strong scent to attract pollinator bees quickly.

Vanda



Nun orchid

Tubular petals lure insects inside.



Aerial roots collect water from moisture in the air.



These showy flowers are pollinated only by one species of butterfly.

White petals attract pollinators in spite of this flower's lack of nectar.



Red disa



Cattleya purpurata

Insects enter this pouchlike petal and are covered in pollen as they struggle to get out.

There are **28,000 known species** of orchids in the world.

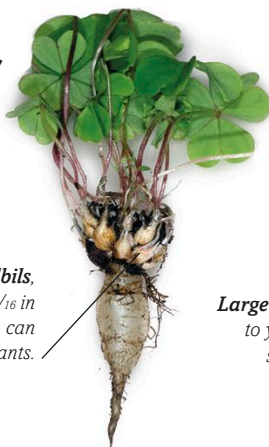
platform for pollinators. **Oncidium** and **zygopetalum** flowers have particularly large lip petals, and in the **nun orchid** and **cattleya** flowers, these take the shape of colorful tubes. Orchids bundle their pollen into sticky packages, which attach to pollinators when they visit the flower. Some orchids can be pollinated only by a single species of insect—for the **red disa** orchid, for example, it is the mountain pride butterfly. This leaves the orchid very vulnerable. If the insect went extinct, the orchid would follow.



Blossoms and bulbs

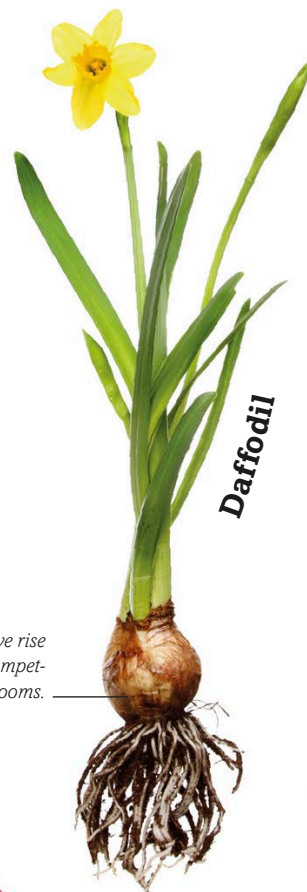


pink wood sorrel



Tiny bulbs called bulbils, which are $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{7}{16}$ in (7–11 mm) in size, can grow into new plants.

Large flowers bloom before leaves grow from the bulb.



Daffodil

Large bulbs give rise to yellow, trumpet-shaped blooms.

Amaryllis



Amaryllis bulb

This bulb starts flowering about 6–8 weeks after planting.

Delicate, lilylike flowers are produced on leafless stalks.



Nerine



Nerine bulb

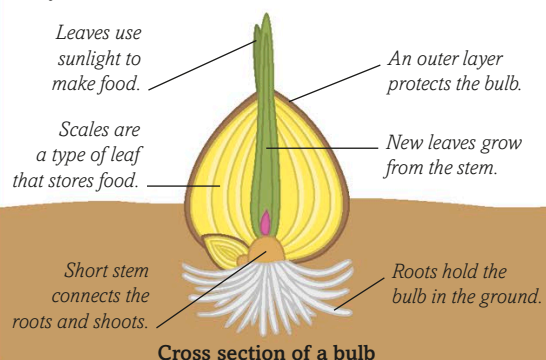
This bulb grows only in cool weather during the fall.

Each **wild leek** stalk can produce **more than 500** flowers.



UNDERGROUND STORE

A bulb is made up of a short stem that produces layers of fleshy leaves known as scales, which store food and water.



Cross section of a bulb

Some of our favorite flowers grow from underground food stores, called bulbs. Packed with food and water, bulbs lie dormant beneath the soil when the weather is either too hot or too cold, hidden from hungry animals. But as soon as conditions are right, they quickly sprout new shoots and leaves.



Leek



Leek bulb

Leek bulbs form long, straight white barrels.

Many South African plants, such as **amaryllises** and **nerines**, spend the hot summer as bulbs under the ground, flowering in the fall when it is cooler. Others, such as **daffodils**, **tulips**, and **hyacinths**, flower in the spring after the cold winter in other countries has ended. These are some of the most

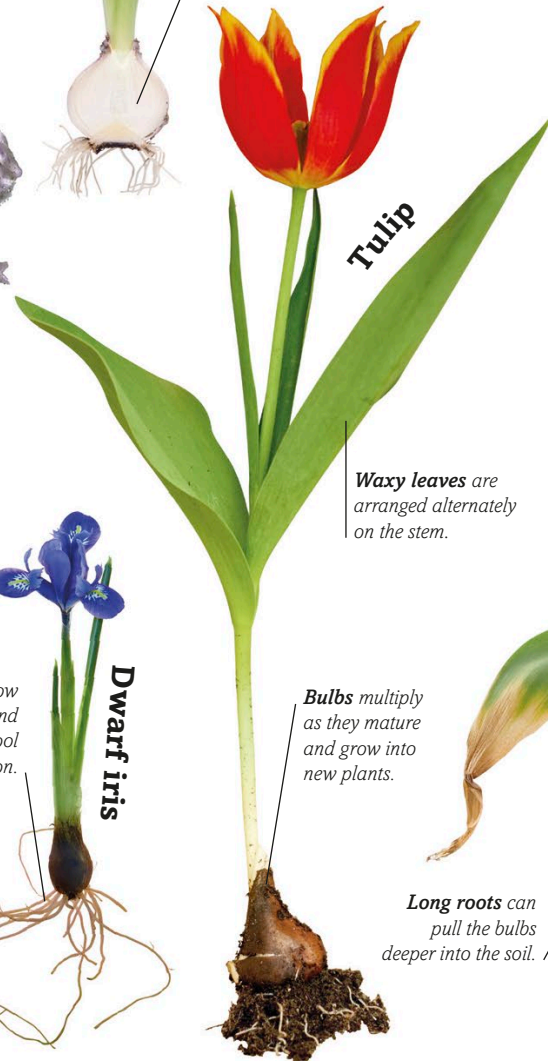
Clusters of purple flowers grow on stalks up to 3 ft (1 m) tall.



Hyacinth

Balls of flowers can grow 7 in (20 cm) across.

Poisonous bulbs can irritate skin on contact.



Tulip

Waxy leaves are arranged alternately on the stem.



Dwarf iris

Roots continue to grow and absorb nutrients and moisture during the cool fall season.

Bulbs multiply as they mature and grow into new plants.

Long roots can pull the bulbs deeper into the soil.



Giant onion

popular blooms, farmed for selling as cut flowers for the home. Although some bulb plants, such as **leeks** and **onions**, are edible, others produce toxic chemicals to discourage animals from digging up the bulbs and eating them. Daffodil, hyacinth, and tulip bulbs are poisonous to many animals.



What's that smell?

When we think of flowers, we usually think of the colorful petals and sweet scents that attract pollinators such as bees or butterflies. But some plants smell truly terrible. Their stinking flowers, leaves, and roots attract a different set of pollinators, including flies and beetles.



Bradford pear

White blossoms smell like rotting fish to attract flies as pollinators.



Carrion flowers

can grow up to **16 in** (41 cm) across.



Carrion plant

The star-shaped, hairy flower looks like a dead animal.

Dragon arum



The flowers, which bloom in spring and summer, smell like rotting meat to draw in insects.

The flower spike may resemble an attractive pineapple but can smell awful.

Pineapple lily



This strange-looking flower traps insects until they are all covered in pollen.

Crown imperial



This plant's brightly colored blooms, leaves, and stem smell like foxes.



Jackal food



No Durian

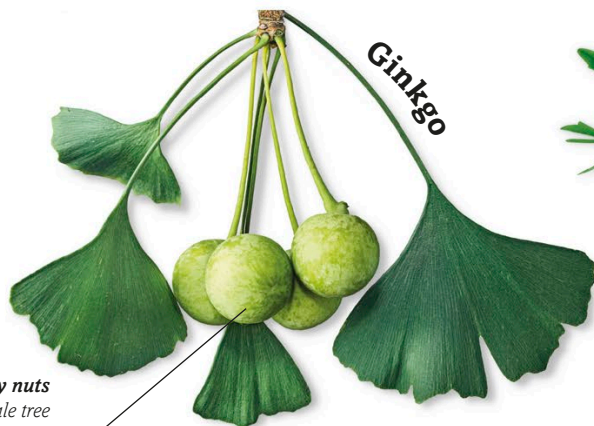
Smelly durian is banned on public transportation in Singapore.

Some flowers, such as those of the **Bradford pear** and **carrión plant**, smell like rotting meat to attract flies. **Jackal food** plants spend most of their lives underground, sending up a poo-scented flower to be pollinated by dung beetles. The **crown imperial** plant, however, uses smell to scare off would-be attackers, such as squirrels and

deer, by stinking like a fox or a skunk. Not only do plants such as the **dead horse arum** and **titan arum** smell awful, but they also heat up their flowers to help this smell spread farther. The vomitlike smells of the **durian** fruit and female **ginkgo** nut are so strong that both are banned from many public places in some countries.



What's that smell?



Ginkgo

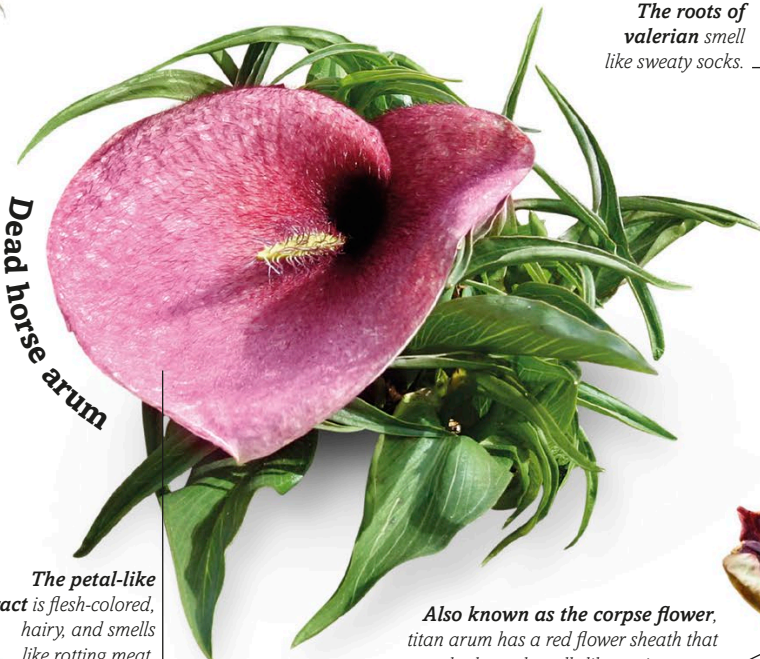
Fleshy, smelly nuts of the female tree contain edible seeds that do not smell.



Valerian

The roots of valerian smell like sweaty socks.

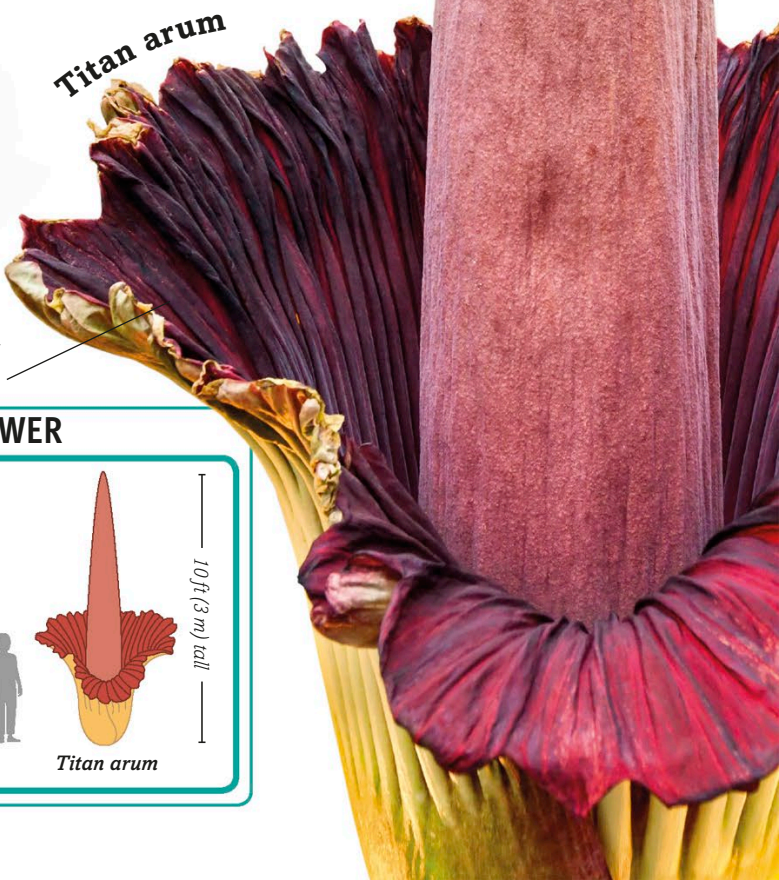
This giant flower spike can heat up to 90 °F (32 °C).



Dead horse arum

The petal-like bract is flesh-colored, hairy, and smells like rotting meat.

Also known as the corpse flower, titan arum has a red flower sheath that looks and smells like rotting meat.



Titan arum



Stinking iris

The delicate leaves of this plant smell like roast beef when bruised or damaged.

FLOWER TOWER

The titan arum makes the tallest flower spike in the world, but it flowers only once every two to seven years in the Sumatran rain forest in Indonesia.

10 ft (3 m) tall

Titan arum



Living in water

Ponds, rivers, and oceans are full of plants. These often grow quickly because they have access to a lot of water and sunlight. Some aquatic plants float on the surface, their flat leaves soaking up the sun's rays, while others are fully submerged. Many send up leaves and flowers from an anchored underwater root.

Flowering rush



Flower spike and leaves reach up to 5 ft (1.5 m) tall.

Waxy lily pads rest on the water's surface.

Water lily



Air-filled leaf stalks help the plant float.

Water hyacinth



Fanwort



Fan-shaped leaves give this plant its name.

Hornwort



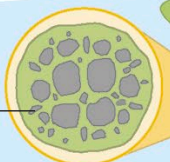
Stems, not roots, anchor this plant under water.



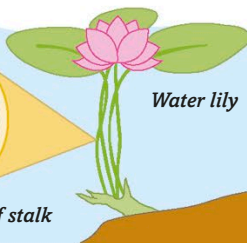
LIVING UNDER WATER

All plants need oxygen to survive. Some aquatic plants take in oxygen from the water, while others, such as the water lily, have tiny tubes in their stalks to carry air from above the water's surface to their roots.

Air spaces allow oxygen to pass from the leaves down to the roots.



Cross section of leaf stalk



Water lily

Just like plants on land, water-based plants need sunlight to make food and have found their own unique ways to survive. Plants such as the **flowering rush** and **water lily** are rooted at the bottom of ponds and rivers but push out long leaves to capture sunlight and tall flower stalks to be pollinated by insects. The feathery leaves of the **fanwort** and **hornwort** spread out

to let the water drift freely through without tearing them. **Water hyacinths** and **water lettuces** trap air in their leaves to help them float. While some water plants provide a habitat and food for fish and other aquatic animals, others such as **waterweed** and **parrot's feather** grow so quickly that they often take over lakes and streams, harming other plants and the animals that live there.



Umbrella grass

Tufts of leaves protect the developing flowers.

Water lettuce

Tall stems carry leaves that resemble umbrella spokes.

Tiny hairs trap air to help the plant float.

Leaves grow up to 6½ ft (2 m) long.

Brazilian waterweed

Dense leaves can be up to 1 in (3 cm) long.

Parrot's feather

Bright green feathery leaves and stem can stand up to 11¾ in (30 cm) out of the water.

Pairs of flowers form a V shape.

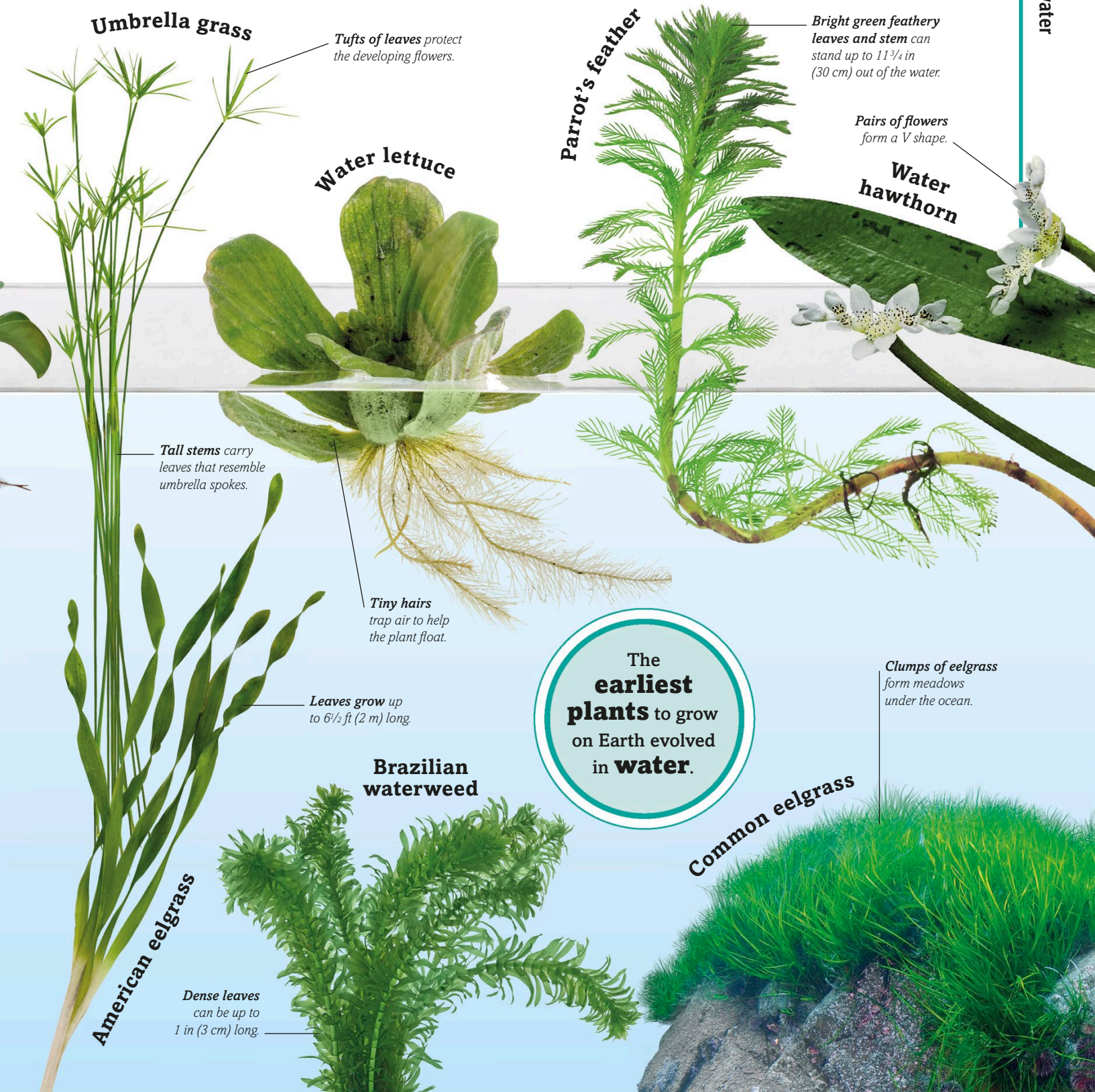
Water hawthorn

The **earliest plants** to grow on Earth evolved in **water**.

Clumps of eelgrass form meadows under the ocean.

Common eelgrass

American eelgrass





Along the river

The soil along a riverbank is rich in nutrients deposited by flooding, so plants here can grow large and often very fast. They can thrive all summer long, as they never suffer drought. However, when a river floods, the fast-flowing water may carry away anything not firmly rooted in the soil.

Swamp rose mallow



Each large flower grows to about 6 in (15 cm) across.

Brilliant yellow flowers attract bees in early spring.



Marsh marigold

Tiny, brown female flowers grow in the form of a dense spike.

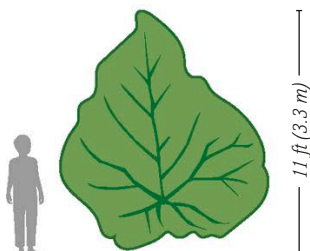
Giant rhubarb

These huge leaves have a spiny underside that stops animals from eating them.

Cattail

GIANT LEAVES

Native to riverbanks in Brazil, the giant rhubarb has massive leaves—the largest undivided leaves of any flowering plant. Its flowers, however, are tiny and grow on spiky heads near the ground.



One of the biggest riverside plants, the **giant rhubarb**, grows 8 ft (2.5 m) tall and 13 ft (4 m) wide. Not much smaller, the **white skunk cabbage** grows huge cabbagelike leaves. Both plants die away in winter, shedding leaves that might otherwise become caught up in floodwater and uproot them. Plants such as the **marsh marigold**, **purple**

loosestrife, **water spearmint**, and **candelabra primrose** lie dormant in winter but grow fast in spring or summer. **Cattail**, **soft rush**, and **snowberry** have a different survival strategy. They are present all year long, and their tough leaves or stems can withstand swift floodwaters, so each year they grow even larger.

The brown, conelike structures at the end of this nonflowering plant's stems contain spores.

Stalks of horsetail were used by early American pioneers to scour **pots** and **pans**.

Soft rush

Tall spikes of delicate mauve flowers blossom in late summer.

A cluster of bright red flowers grows on the side of the stem.

Rough horsetail

Purple loosestrife

In North America, these white berries are food for bighorn sheep and grizzly bears.

Common snowberry

Clusters of up to six flowers are borne on tall, sturdy stems.

Candelabra primrose

These leaves have a minty smell.

Large, white leaflike bracts attract flies to the smelly flower heads.

Water spearmint

White skunk cabbage



FLOODED FOREST A shoal of fish swirl past the tangled roots of a mangrove tree that stands partially submerged in the warm Caribbean Sea off the Central American country of Belize. Most mangroves grow along tropical and subtropical coastlines, where their roots are flooded with seawater twice a day. Such a wet, salty environment would be fatal to most plants, but mangrove forests thrive in it.



Mangroves include everything from small shrubs to huge trees, all adapted for living in salt water. The plants use a range of survival tactics, from filtering out salt in seawater as they drink it in through their roots to releasing salt through leaf pores. Many mangrove trees stop their roots from rotting by absorbing oxygen through spongy standing roots at low tide. Then, at high

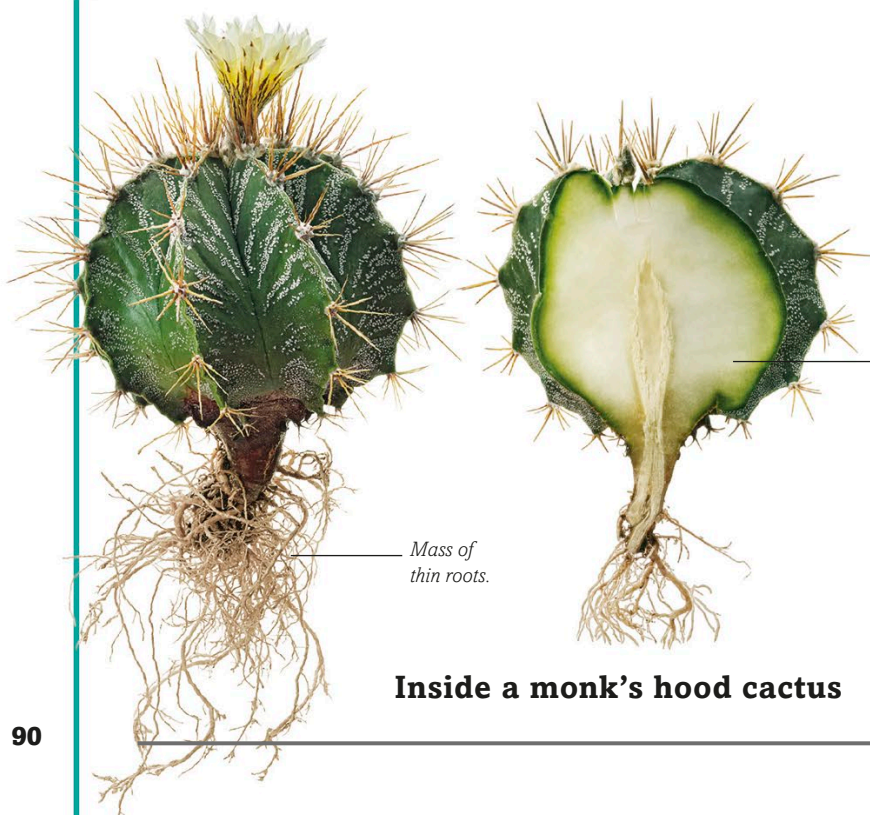
tide, the pores in their roots close, preventing the trees from getting waterlogged. Mangroves are an important tropical and subtropical habitat, acting as natural storm barriers and preventing coastal erosion. The network of roots is also a source of food for fish and other small ocean creatures, and helps shelter them from larger predators.



What is a cactus?

Cacti come in all shapes and sizes, but nearly all of them have large swollen stems that allow them to store water. This is because many cacti grow in areas with little or no rainfall for long periods of time. Desert cacti have clever adaptations to help them survive extreme heat and drought, however a few very different cacti live in rain forests.

Summer flower ▶ The monk's hood cactus produces pale yellow flowers throughout the summer. They are pollinated by insects and produce spiky fruits.

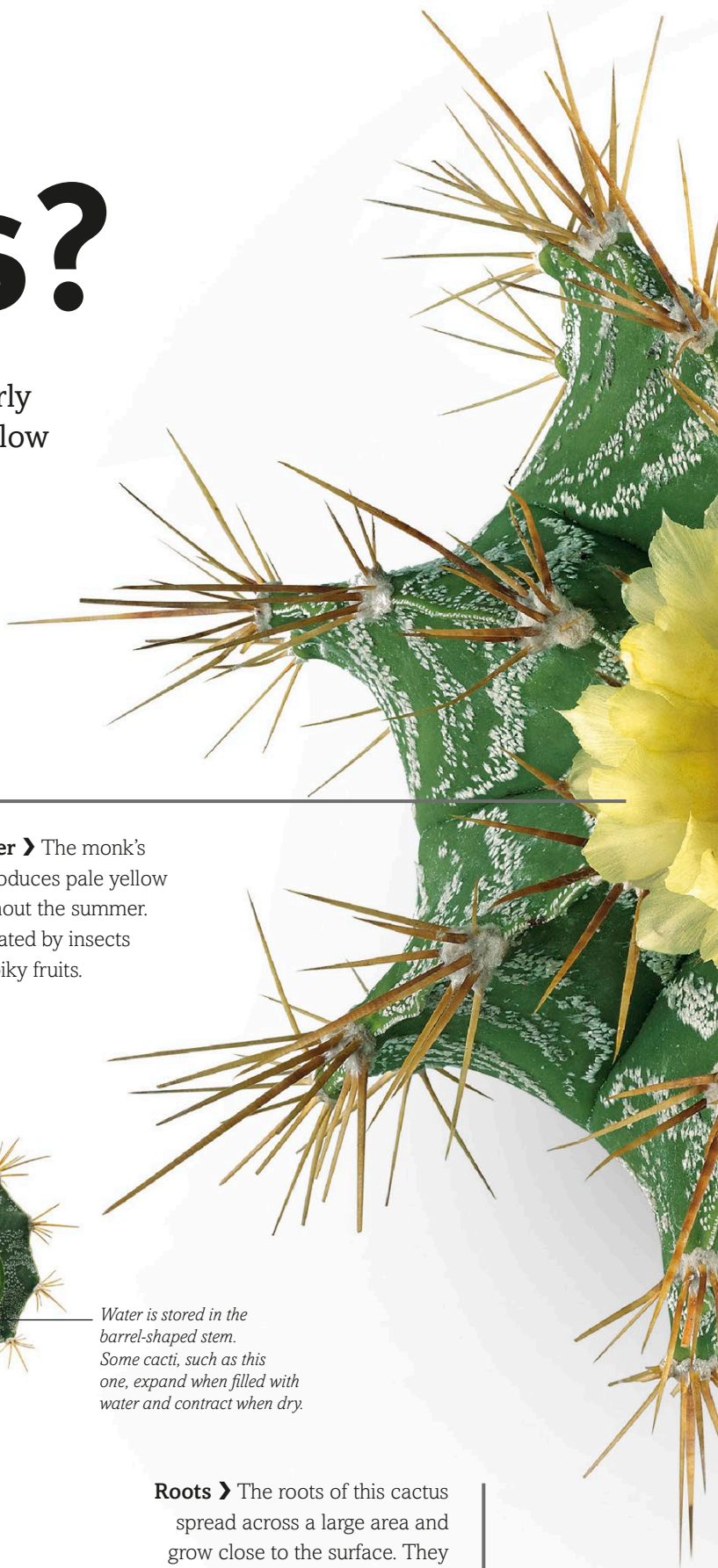


Mass of thin roots.

Water is stored in the barrel-shaped stem. Some cacti, such as this one, expand when filled with water and contract when dry.

Inside a monk's hood cactus

Roots ▶ The roots of this cactus spread across a large area and grow close to the surface. They quickly draw in as much water as possible from rain or dew.





Spine ➤ These help shade the stem and stop animals from eating the cactus. A spine is, in fact, a type of modified leaf with a small surface area to prevent water from evaporating.

The ribs channel dew to the roots.

Monk's hood cactus

Flakes ➤ In a desert, the sun is very bright. White flakes grow on the stem of the cactus, helping to reflect light.

Cacti shapes

Columnar

Cacti, such as the saguaro, can grow 40 ft (12 m) tall, and have distinctive armlike side branches. Bats pollinate their flowers, which grow at the top of the plant.



Clustering

The prickly pear cactus has flattened stems that grow in clusters. The red, prickly fruit must be peeled to remove the small spines.



Globular

Many cacti, like the barrel cactus, have rounded stems. This maximizes water storage, while its vertical ridges direct every drop of water to the roots.



Climbing

Some cacti live in forests, where they clamber up other plants for sunlight. The queen of the night cactus has huge flowers that bloom for just one night.



Where do they grow?

Deserts

Desert cacti have to survive extreme heat and light. Often large and spiny, they grow all over North and South America.



Forests

Some cacti grow in shaded forests. Their stems do not need to store water, as the roots draw moisture from the air.



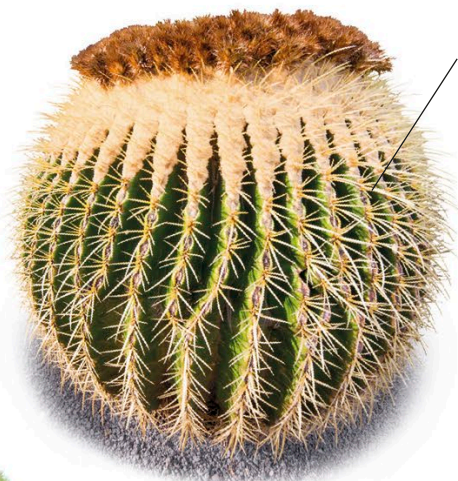
Grasslands

Smaller cacti often grow in grasslands, where the grasses shade them in summer. Most are found in South America.





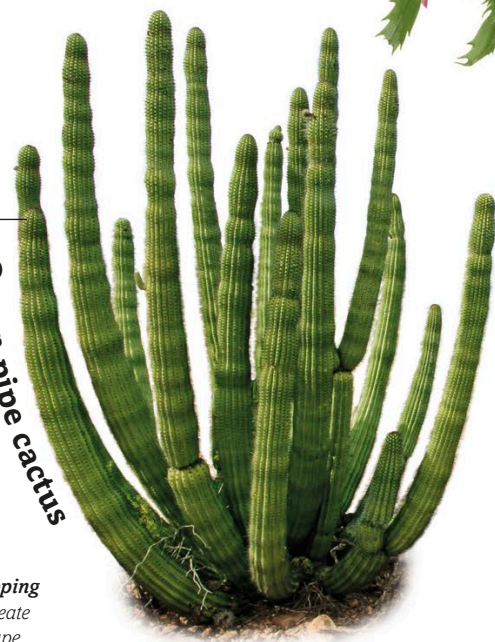
Cool cacti



Long, yellow spines erupt in starry clusters from ridges on the body.

Vertical stems can grow up to 26 ft (8 m) tall.

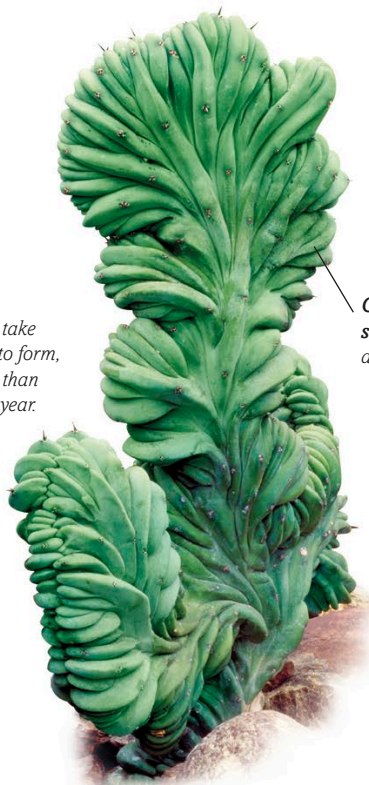
Organ pipe cactus



Overlapping stems create a fan shape.

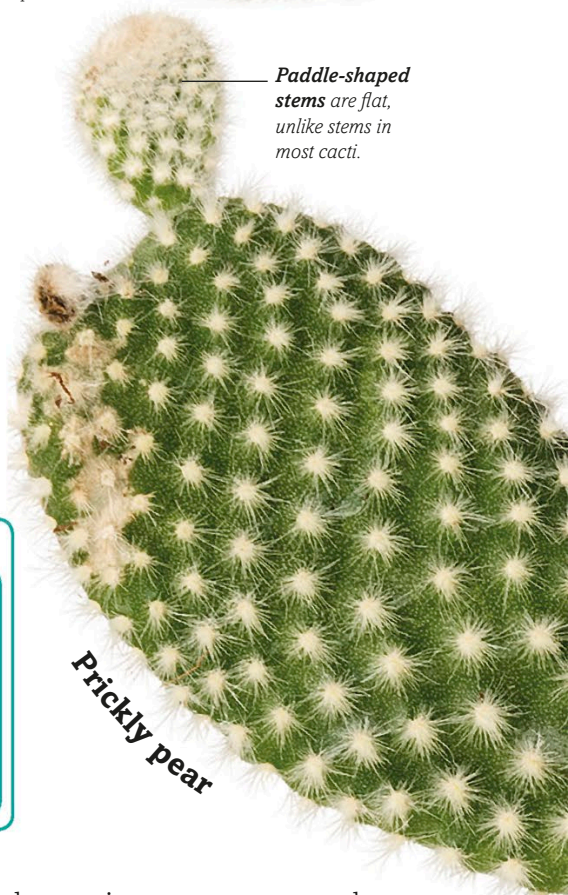
Barrel cactus

Branches can take up to 40 years to form, growing at less than 1 in (2.5 cm) a year.



Bilberry cactus

Paddle-shaped stems are flat, unlike stems in most cacti.



Prickly pear

Saguaro



Birds such as this owl use the saguaro cactus for nesting.



TALLEST CACTUS

With a recorded height of 63 ft (19.2 m) and a trunk about 3 ft (1 m) thick, the Mexican false saguaro is the tallest-known living cactus in the world.



63 ft (19.2 m)

Many cacti live in the desert, where their water-filled stems help them survive long periods of drought. Most plants use their leaves to make food from sunlight, but cacti do this using their green, fleshy stems. To protect themselves from hungry animals, cacti have specially adapted leaves called spines.

Living in hot and dry environments means that cacti have to make the most of the rare, but often heavy, rainfall. Ribs on the **barrel cactus** allow it to stretch its stem to quickly take in as much water as possible. In harsh desert conditions, plants grow very slowly and live a long time. Some, such as the **saguaro** and **false saguaro cacti**, can live for up to 300 years. These tall



Christmas cactus

Flowers bloom around Christmastime in the Northern Hemisphere.



Bishop's cap cactus



Tephrocactus

Fiercely sharp, long spines protect this cactus.

Fragrant flowers grow on top of this rounded cactus.



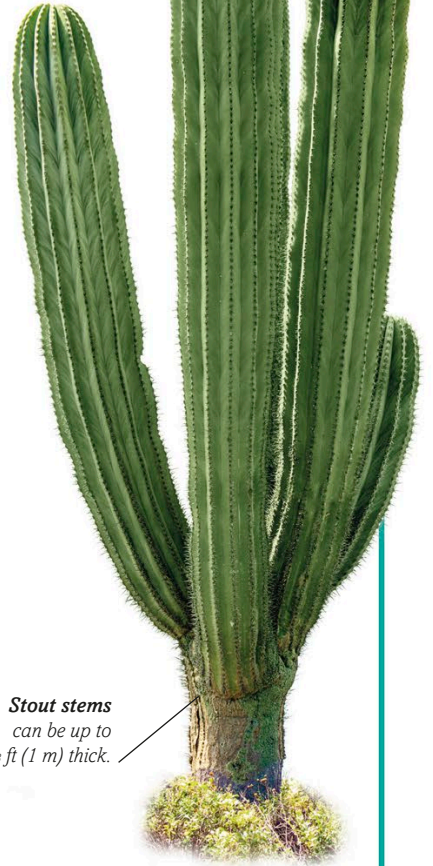
Mexican fire barrel

White, hairlike spines reduce evaporation.

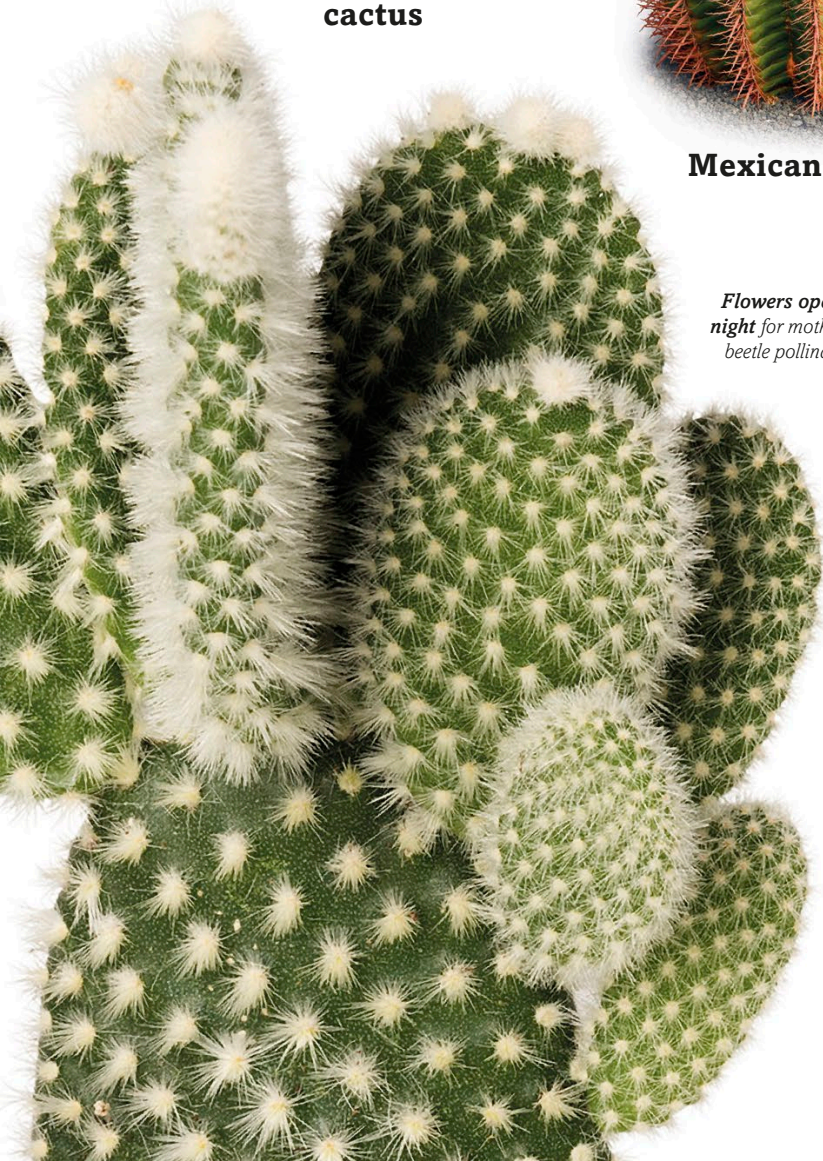


Old man cactus

Red spines give this plant its name.



False saguaro



Flowers open at night for moth and beetle pollinators.



Neon broom cactus

Stout stems can be up to 3 1/3 ft (1 m) thick.

cacti, along with the **organ pipe cactus**, are pollinated by lesser long-nosed bats at night, while most other species are visited by insects or birds during the day. **Prickly pear** flowers curl their anthers around visiting bees to coat them in pollen. Not all cacti live in the desert—the **Christmas cactus**, for example, grows on trees in the tropical rain forests of Brazil.

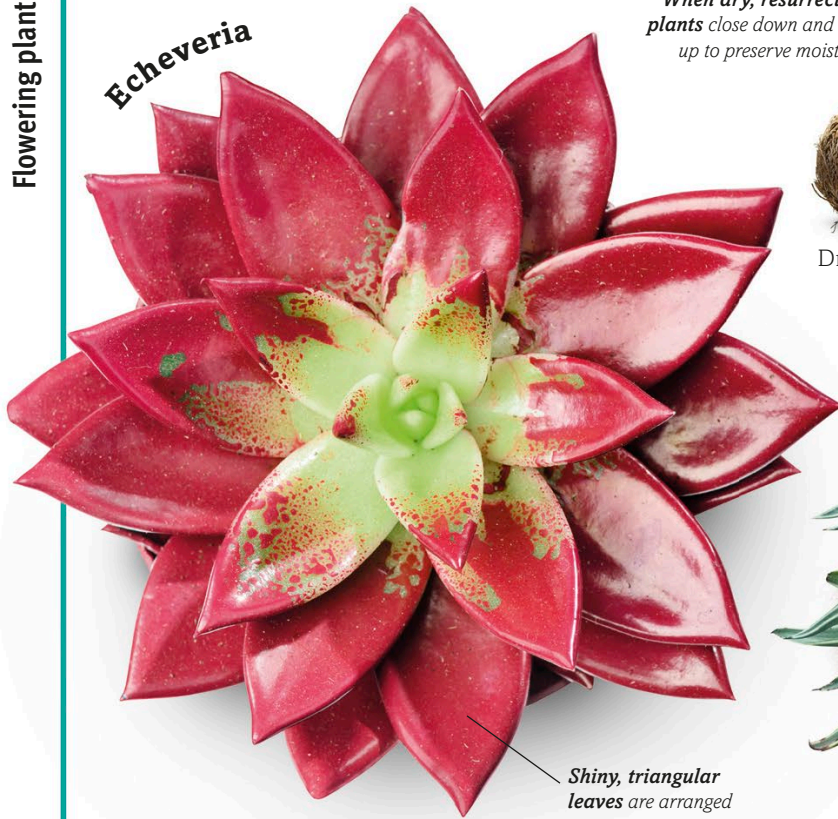




Desert survivors

Flowering plants

Echeveria



Shiny, triangular leaves are arranged in a rosette.

When dry, resurrection plants close down and curl up to preserve moisture.

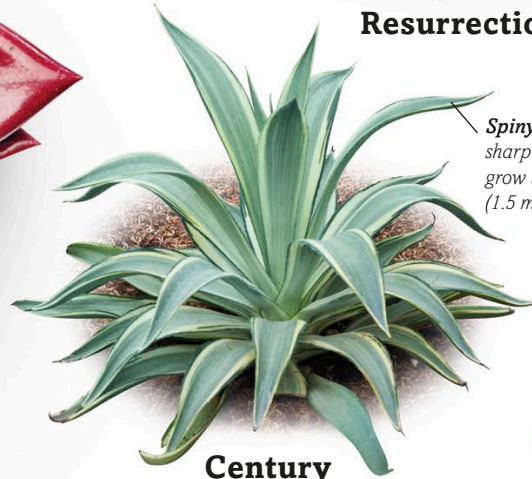


Dried plant

After rain, the leaves unfurl in a matter of hours.



Resurrection plant



Century plant

Spiny leaves with sharp tips can grow up to 5 ft (1.5 m) in length.



Camel thorn

The high, thorny branches can be eaten only by giraffes, with their muscular tongues.

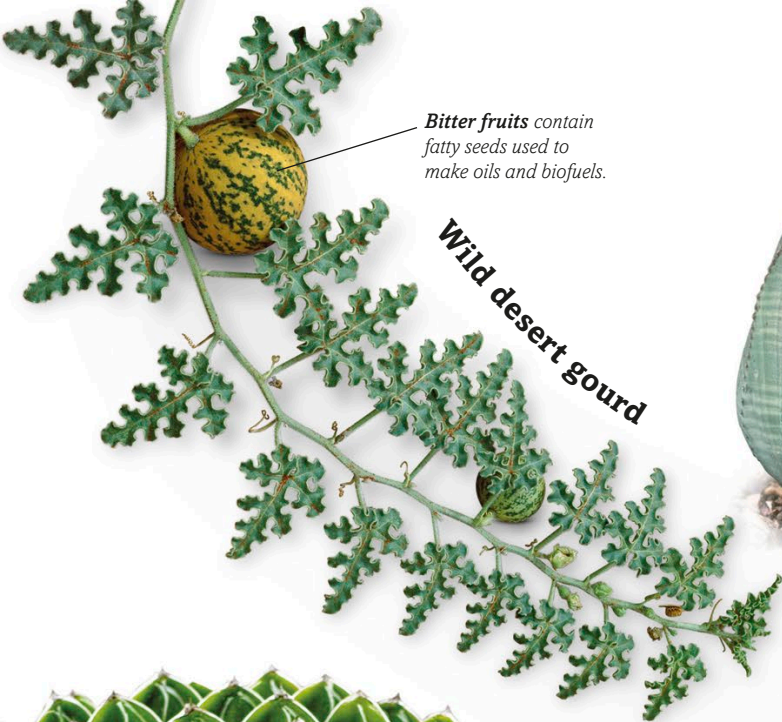


Llavea

The dense cushions of leaves of this poisonous plant trap water inside.

A desert is a very dry area, with less than 10 in (25 cm) of rainfall a year. All plants need water to survive, but desert plants have adapted to their habitat by using ingenious methods of storing water, reducing the amount they lose, or just by being able to survive drying out.

The echeveria plant and the Queen Victoria agave retain water by trapping it inside their fleshy leaves. Their leaves also have a waxy surface that reflects the sun's rays and keeps the plant cool. The resurrection plant can lose more than 95 percent of its weight during dry periods, shriveling into a dry ball. It can survive



Bitter fruits contain fatty seeds used to make oils and biofuels.

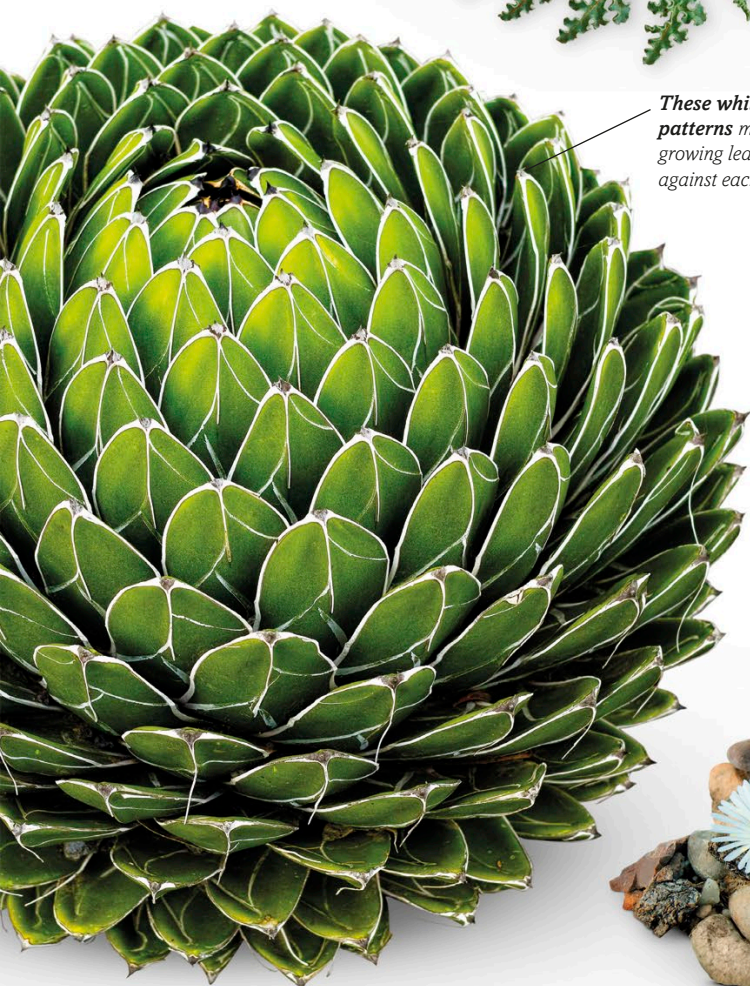
Wild desert gourd



The fleshy stem makes food for the plant by photosynthesis.

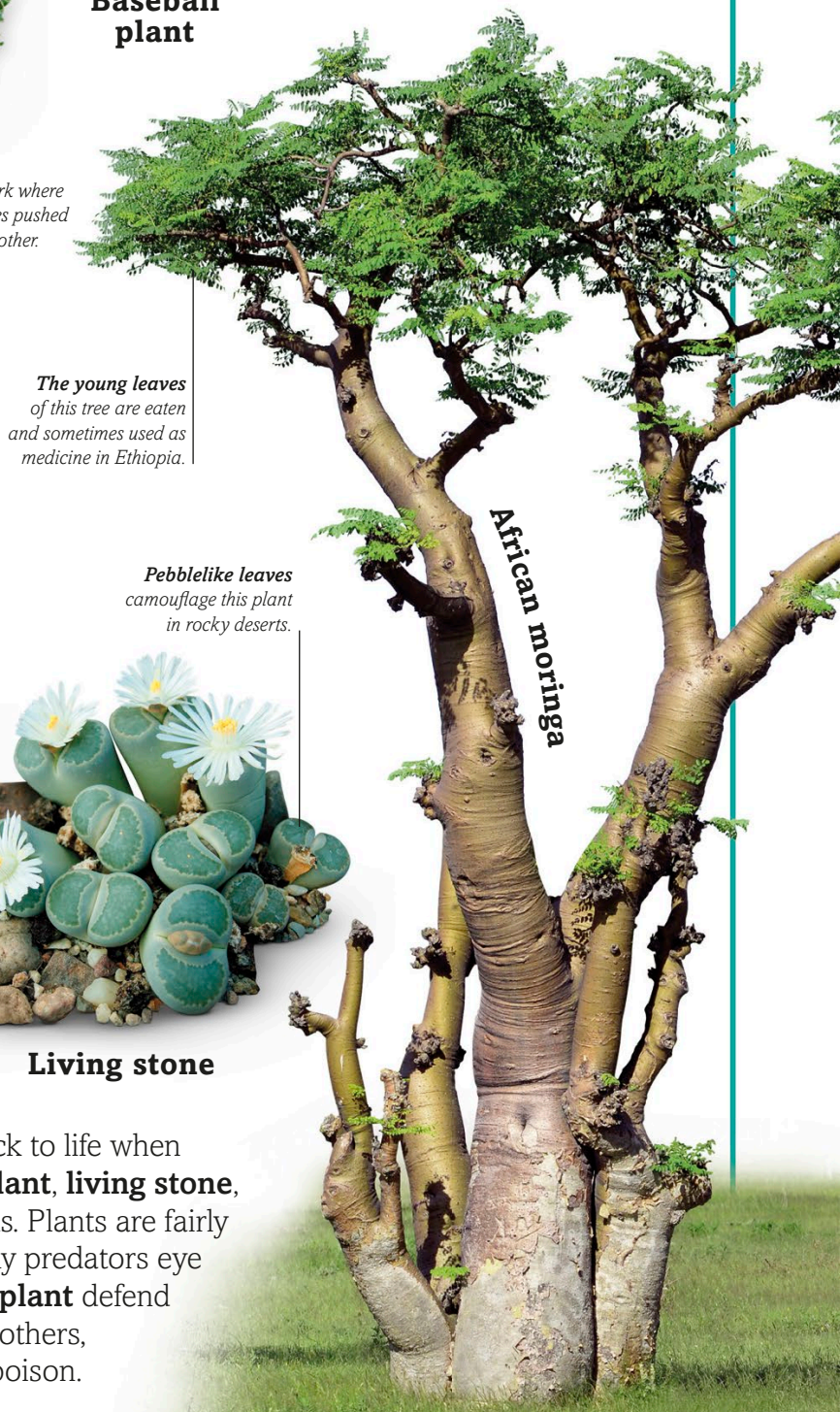
Baseball plant

Now **protected** by law, baseball plants nearly went **extinct** due to overcollecting.



These white patterns mark where growing leaves pushed against each other.

Queen Victoria agave



African moringa

The young leaves of this tree are eaten and sometimes used as medicine in Ethiopia.

Pebblelike leaves camouflage this plant in rocky deserts.



Living stone

like this for several years but quickly comes back to life when rain soaks its leaves. Like cacti, the **baseball plant**, **living stone**, and **African moringa** store water in their stems. Plants are fairly uncommon in deserts and semideserts, so many predators eye them hungrily. The **camel thorn** and **century plant** defend themselves using sharp thorns or spines, while others, including the **llareta**, protect themselves with poison.





DESERT BLOOM The vast Atacama Desert in Chile is one of the driest places in the world, with very little rainfall. The bare, baked ground appears bleak and lifeless. When it rains, however, millions of flowering plants, such as these purple pussy-paws, spring up and transform the land into a carpet of color. These short-lived plants, or “ephemerals,” grow from seeds that have long lain dormant in the earth.



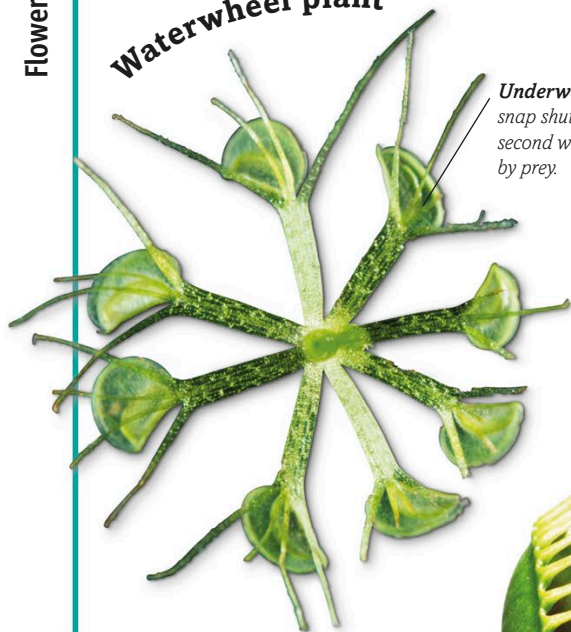
Desert ephemerals are plants that live fast and die young. Once the right conditions have triggered their explosion of growth, they have a few weeks, or often just days, to complete their life cycle. Ephemerals are usually small and short. Growing tall takes time and energy, and desert plants have none to spare. They must make the most of their short

season by producing flowers and setting seed very quickly. With the return of drought, the ephemerals disappear as fast as they came. They leave behind their scattered seeds, safely hidden in cracks in the parched ground, where they sit out the tough times until the next rain. It may be a very long wait.



Meat-eating plants

Waterwheel plant

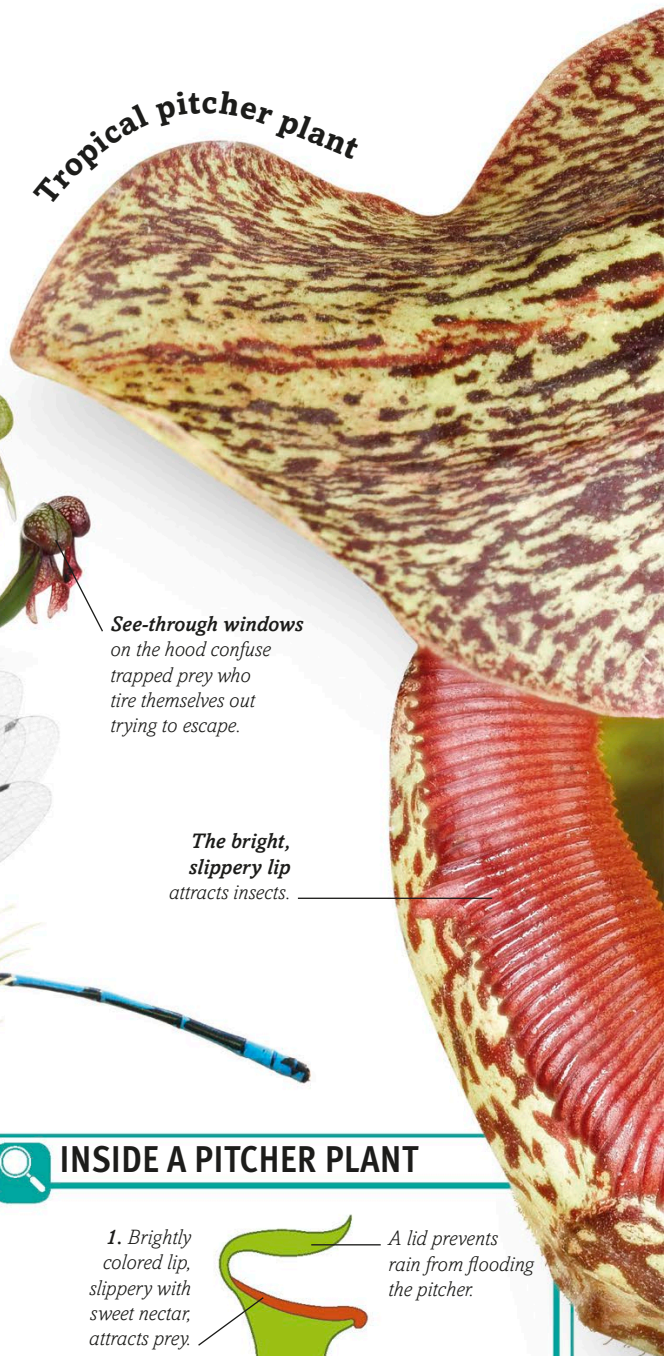


Underwater traps snap shut in $\frac{1}{50}$ of a second when triggered by prey.

Cobra plant



Tropical pitcher plant



See-through windows on the hood confuse trapped prey who tire themselves out trying to escape.

The bright, slippery lip attracts insects.

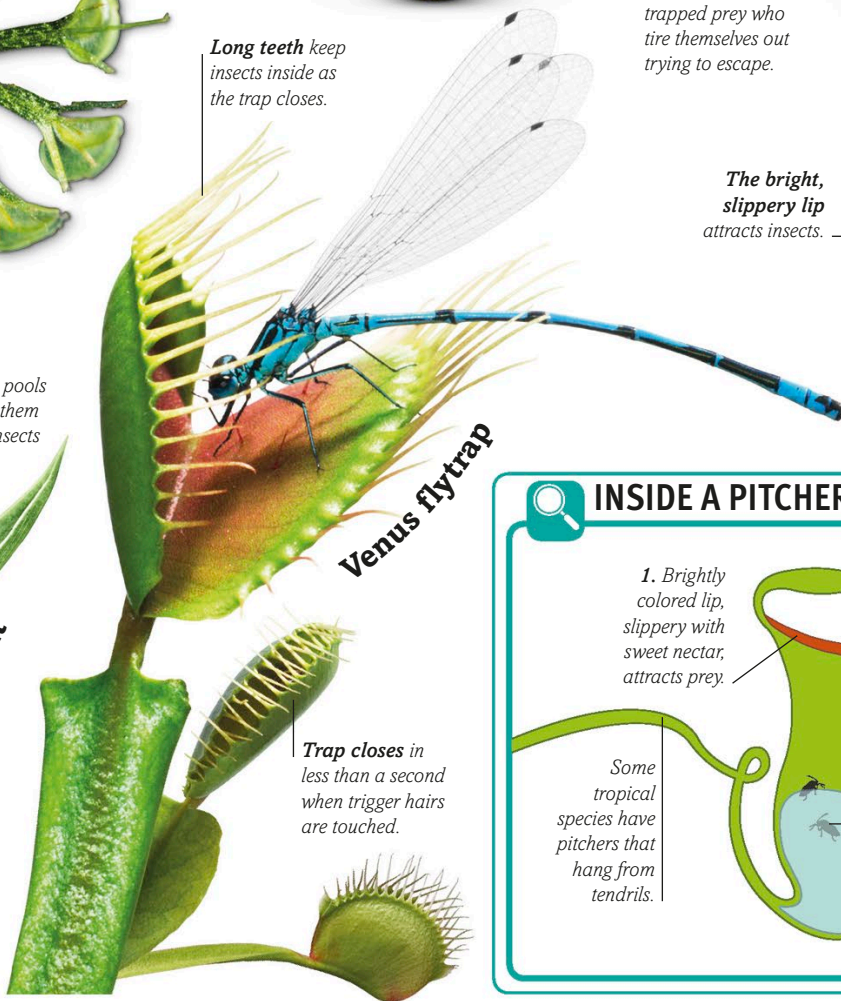
Long teeth keep insects inside as the trap closes.

The leaves have pools of water between them where drowned insects are digested.

Powdery strap airplant

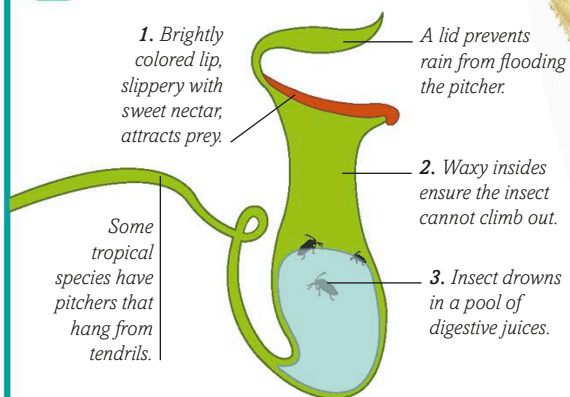


Venus flytrap



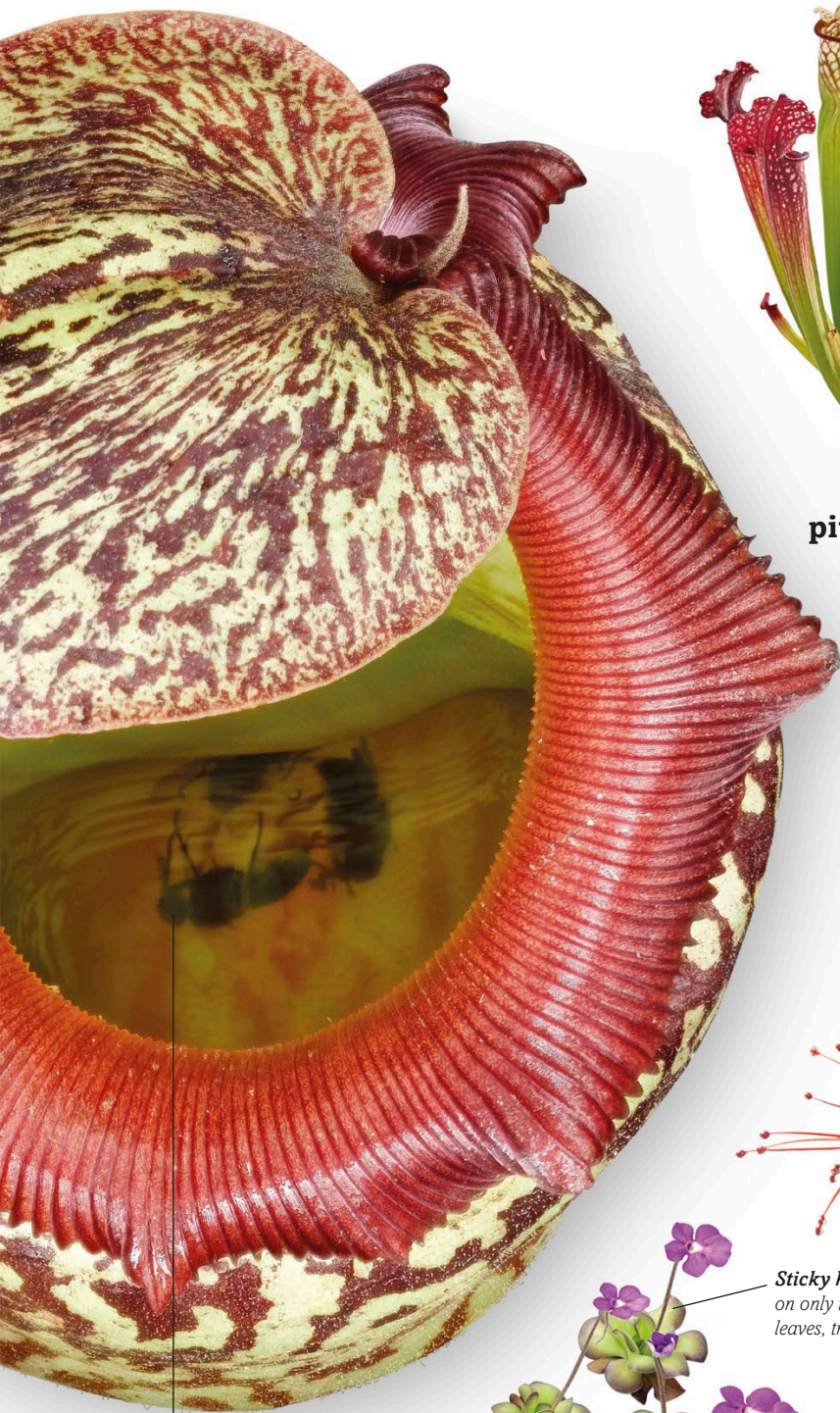
Trap closes in less than a second when trigger hairs are touched.

INSIDE A PITCHER PLANT



Many animals eat plants, but have you ever heard of a plant eating an animal? Meat-eating plants often grow in bogs, trapping insects and other small animals to get the nitrogen and minerals they need that are missing from the wet soil.

There are different types of meat-eating, or carnivorous, plants. **Waterwheel plants** and **Venus flytraps** have snap traps, which quickly close shut around their victims. **Pitcher plants** have a lip of nectar to attract their prey. The insects then fall into the pitcher (jug) of digestive



The undigested parts of insects sink to the bottom of the colorful trap.

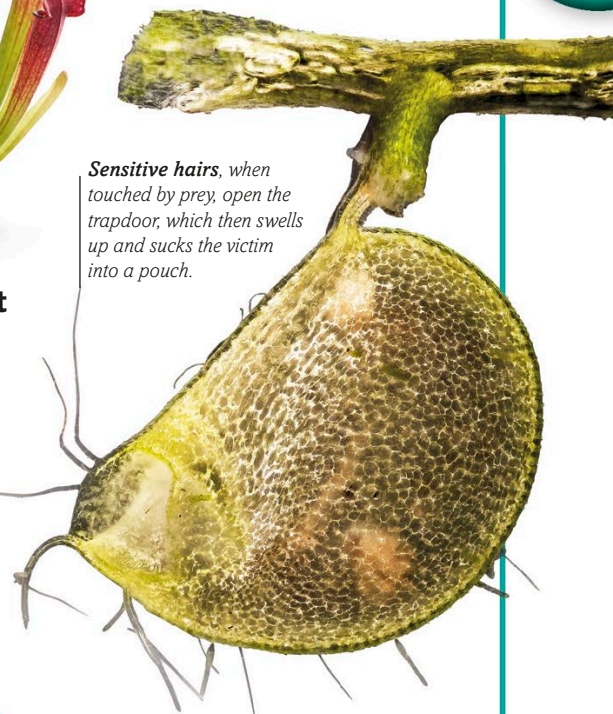


Butterwort



Trumpet pitcher plant

Tubelike traps contain downward-pointing hairs to prevent their victims' escape.



Bladderwort

Sensitive hairs, when touched by prey, open the trapdoor, which then swells up and sucks the victim into a pouch.

Sensitive hairs covered in sticky juices wrap around the prey.



Sticky hairs, present on only the summer leaves, trap insects.

Sundew

Tube-shaped leaves produce nectar to attract insects, which are digested by bacteria in the trap.



Sun pitcher plant

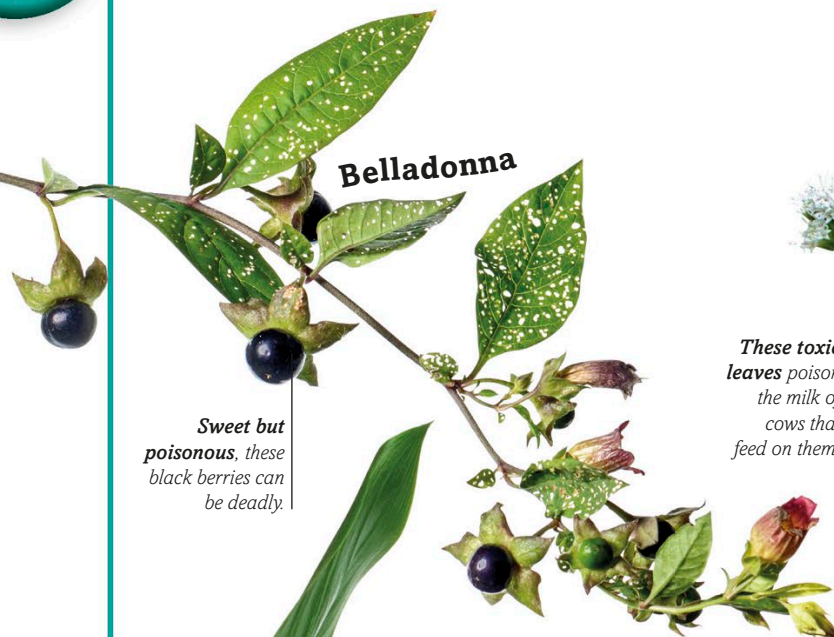
juices, which break down their bodies. The flypaper traps of the **butterwort** and **sundew** have sticky hairs that make sweet treats to attract insects, which they digest slowly. The **bladderwort** is an amazing plant with leaves that have evolved over

a long time to form pouchlike traps to help them get the nutrients they need to survive. Its underwater traps are triggered by sensitive hairs and act like vacuum cleaners to suck in small prey as they swim by.





Poisonous plants



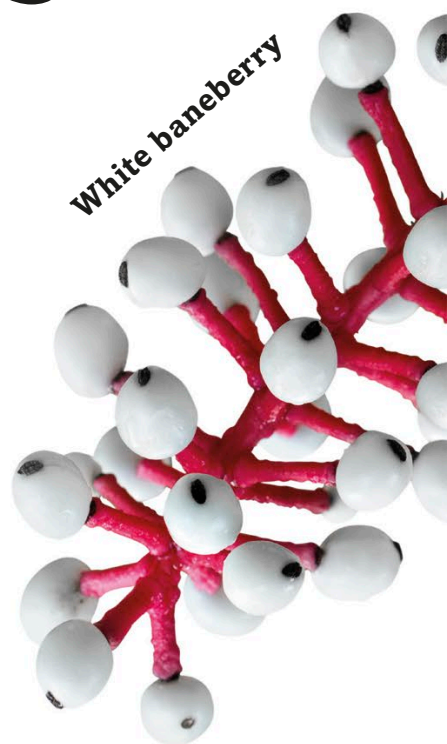
Belladonna

Sweet but poisonous, these black berries can be deadly.

These toxic leaves poison the milk of cows that feed on them.

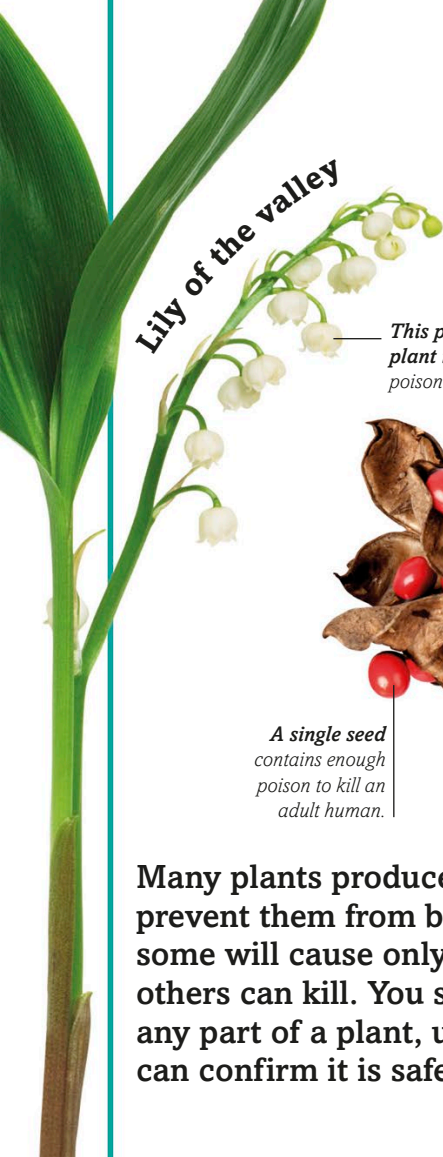


White snakeroot



White baneberry

All parts of this plant are toxic, though the seeds contain the most poison.



Lily of the valley

This pretty plant is highly poisonous.

A single seed contains enough poison to kill an adult human.



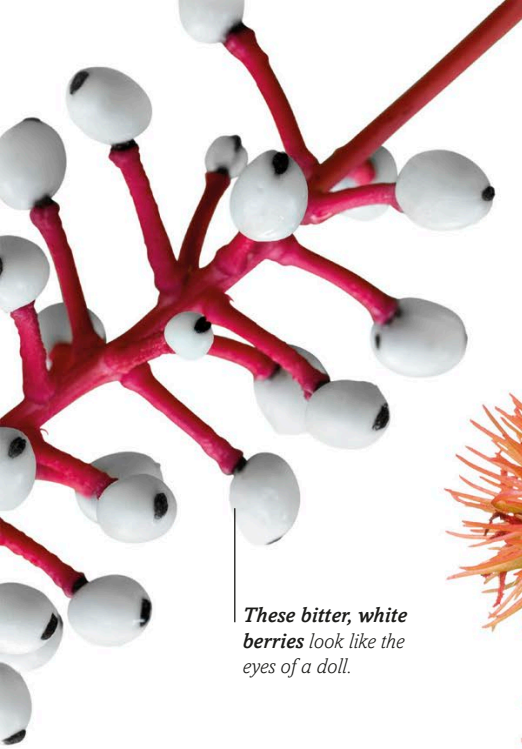
Rosary pea



Hemlock

Many plants produce poisons to prevent them from being eaten. While some will cause only a stomachache, others can kill. You should never eat any part of a plant, unless an expert can confirm it is safe.

Throughout history, humans have known about the poisonous properties of certain plants and used them for deadly ends. **Belladonna** was used to make poison-tipped arrows, while **hemlock** is said to have been used to kill the great philosopher Socrates in ancient Greece. **Wolfsbane** was



These bitter, white berries look like the eyes of a doll.

Pong pong



The fruit contains a poisonous seed—eating it can kill a human in two days.

Oleander



The poisonous leaves are very bitter.

Castor oil plant



Each spiny capsule has three beans inside.

These dangerous leaves can cause blisters if touched.



Manchineel

The toxic leaves of this plant can kill within hours if eaten.



Yew

Harmless red berries hide poisonous seeds.

The purple, helmet-shaped flowers of this plant give it its other name, "Devil's Helmet."

Wolfsbane



The deadly sap of these leaves may cause a rash if touched.

Poisonous plants contain some of the most **deadly substances** in the world.

rubbed on arrows for hunting wolves, and during Roman times, it was commonly used for murdering enemies. Ricin, extracted from the **castor oil plant**, remains one of the most deadly poisons known today. Although all the plants shown here are toxic

to humans, some are harmless to animals. For example, birds can eat the berries of the **white baneberry** plant and **yew** without any ill effects. The birds then spread the seeds in their poo. Iguanas are known to feast on the fruit and leaves of the toxic **manchineel**.

Parasitic plants



Mistletoe

The plants take root on branches, from seeds dropped by birds that eat mistletoe berries.



Dodder

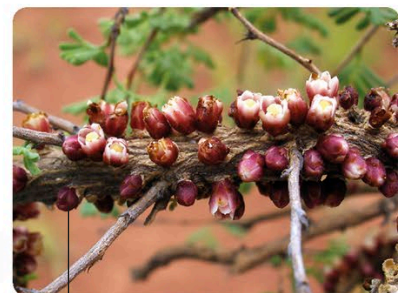
Thin stems wrap around a host plant and weaken its immune system.



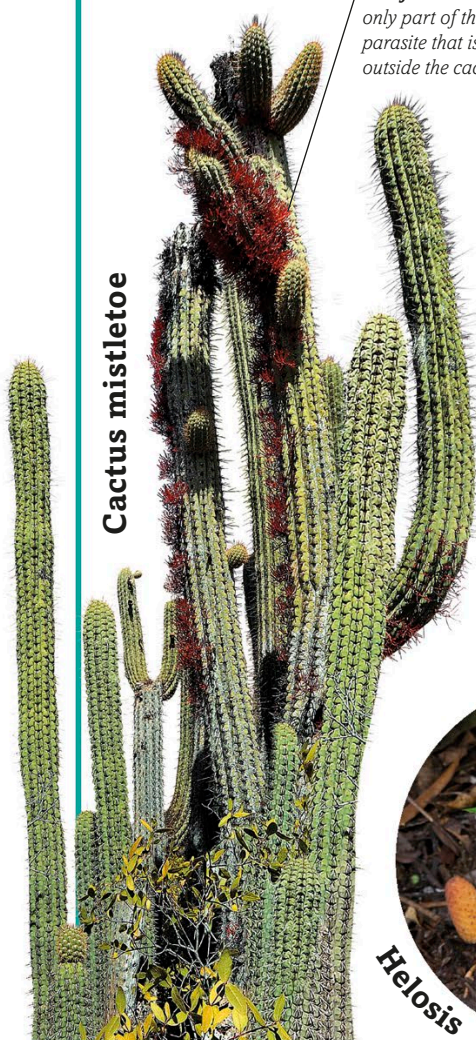
The pale stems of this plant are parasites of ivy plants.



Thurber's stemsucker



Tiny flowers, 2 mm across, bloom along the host stem.



Cactus mistletoe

Red flowers are the only part of this leafless parasite that is visible outside the cactus.

Mushroom-shaped flower stalks emerge from underground stems, which feed on the roots of host plants.



Helosis



Ivy broomrape

Most plants absorb water and nutrients from the soil to make their own food using energy from sunlight, but others have developed sneakier ways to survive. Parasitic plants pierce the stems or roots of other plants to steal their hard-earned supplies.

There are two main types of parasitic plants. Hemiparasites (half parasites) can use sunlight to make some of their own food but absorb water, nutrients, and sometimes sugars from the host plants they live on. Some hemiparasites, such as **mistletoe** and the **Australian Christmas tree**, will



Eyebright

This tiny wildflower relies on nutrients stolen from the roots of nearby grasses.

Butter and eggs



The parasite steals nutrients from the roots of other plants to grow as tall as 14 in (35 cm).

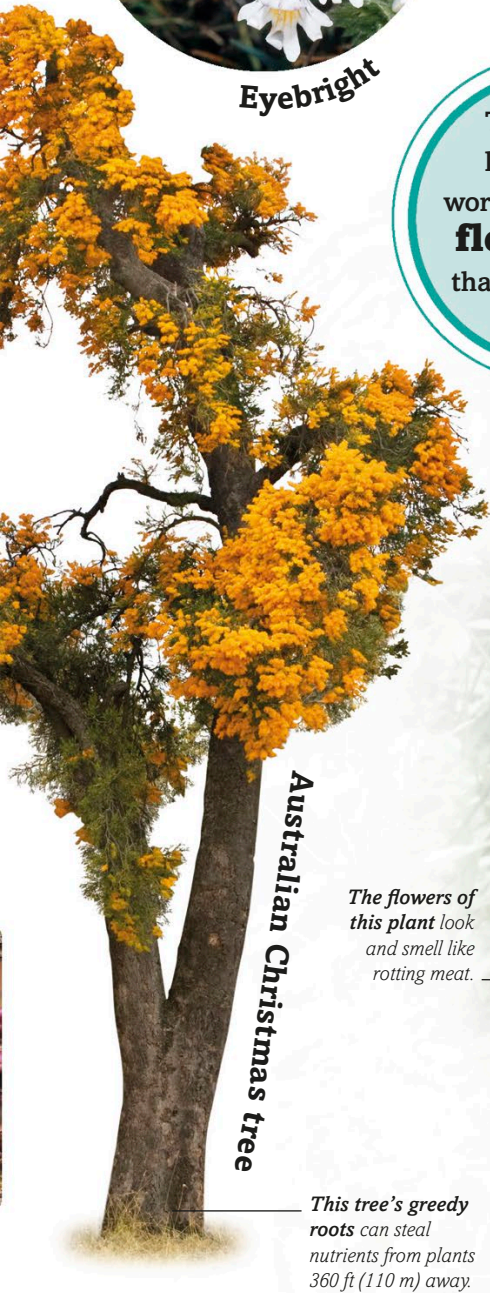
The corpse lily has the world's **largest flower**, more than 3 1/4 ft (1 m) across.

Corpse lily



The flowers of this plant look and smell like rotting meat.

Australian Christmas tree

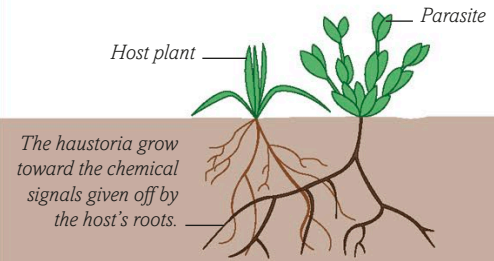


This tree's greedy roots can steal nutrients from plants 360 ft (110 m) away.



INVADING A HOST

All parasitic plants have modified roots called haustoria, which enter the roots or stems of host plants to steal food, water, and nutrients.



die if they cannot find a host to steal from. Others, including **eyebright** and **butter and eggs**, can survive without a host, although they tend to not grow as well. On the other hand, the second type, holoparasites (whole parasites), cannot make any food of their own and must find a host plant to survive.

Some holoparasites, such as **dodder**, grow above ground. Most, such as the **cactus mistletoe**, **Helosis**, **Thurber's stemsucker**, and the impressive **corpse lily**, live within their host plant, emerging only to flower. Parasitic plants do not generally kill their hosts but can weaken them.

Mountain life

This sugarbush is an endangered plant in its native South Africa.

Serpentine sugarbush



Forget-me-not

Many heads of bright yellow flowers burst out of each rosette.

These tightly curled heads of pink buds open into blue flowers.

The alpine pink's tiny leaves are almost hidden by large flowers in spring.



Alpine pink

The tall flower spikes develop quickly in spring.

Broadleaf stonecrop

Star-shaped flowers attract pollinating bees.

Fleshy blue-green leaves are spade-shaped.

Alpine spotted orchid

Cobweb house-leek

Life up a mountain is harsh. At high altitude, plants are exposed to extreme temperatures, freezing weather in winter, and intense sunlight in summer. The thin soil is dry. Yet some hardy plants manage to survive here. Many have short stems to keep out of the wind and small leaves to reduce heat and water loss. They usually hug the ground in clumps. Some plants even have silver or white leaves to reflect sunlight.



The spikes of nodding flowers may grow to a height of 24 in (60 cm).

Spotted fritillary

Some plants can grow **up to 20,177 ft** (6,150 m) above sea level.



Mountain buttercup

This wild plant stays very short to avoid strong winds.



Haleakala silversword

This endangered Hawaiian plant grows on the edge of a volcano at more than 6,900 ft (2,100 m). Its swordlike leaves are covered in silver hair.

Even the flower heads of the prostrate speedwell grow close to the ground.

Prostrate speedwell



This beautiful plant survives extreme cold, but not drought.



Himalayan may apple

Fine white hairs that look like cobwebs reduce heat and water loss.

Long-petaled lewisia

This rare plant is found only near Lake Tahoe in California.



Mountain plants have adapted to the dry climate of their habitat in different ways. The **alpine spotted orchid** and **spotted fritillary** survive the cold winter as bulbs, flowering in spring. The **Himalayan may apple** cannot tolerate bright, dry conditions, so it grows quickly in spring and then dies back underground for the rest of the year. Others, such as the **broadleaf stonecrop**, **alpine pink**, **cobweb house-leek**, and **long-petaled lewisia** produce short, sturdy leaves, and survive all year by staying close to the ground for protection from the wind.

Creepers and climbers

Fine tendrils twirl slowly around until they find something to grab onto.

Vines **recognize** their own chemical **signal** so avoid strangling themselves.

Star jasmine

This sweetly scented climber is covered in white flowers.

Gardeners often grow these fragrant flowers up a teepee of poles.

Everlasting pea

Showers of flowers hang from twining stems.

The plant's thorny stems can grow up to 39 ft (12 m) tall.

Bougainvillea

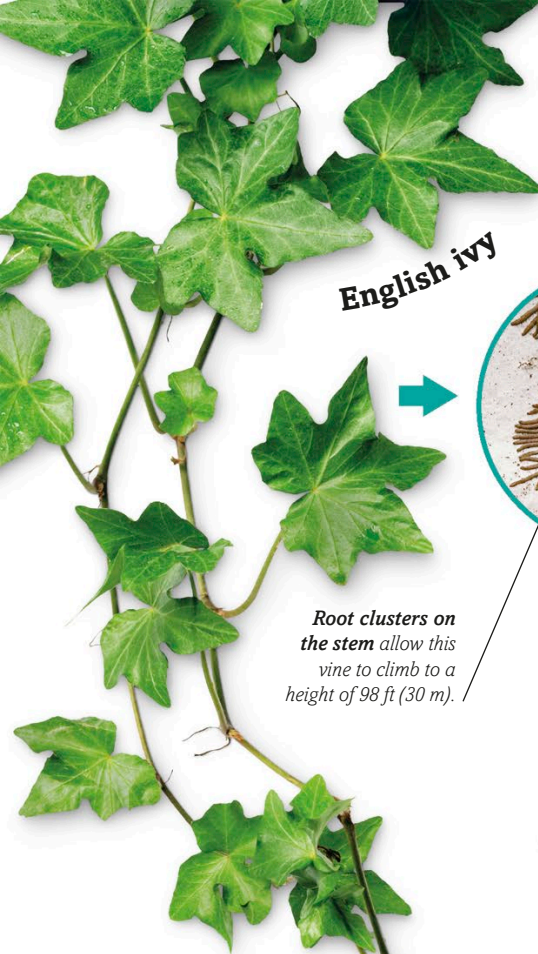
Wisteria



Thorny hooks

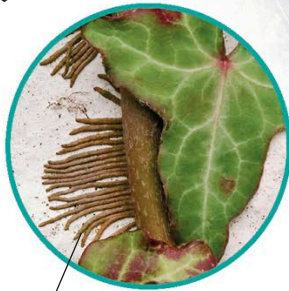
Vines can be creepers or climbers. Creepers grow and spread along the ground, while climbers clamber up towards the sunlight. As these vines grow, they may curl around a tree, or up a wall or fence, adding colour to the garden.

Some creepers, such as **jasmine**, twirl their flexible stems around other plants to reach for the sky. **Clematis** plants do the same but use long leaf stalks to wrap around their neighbors in order to climb upward. **Bougainvillea** hooks its thorns into surfaces to drag itself higher, while **everlasting pea**,



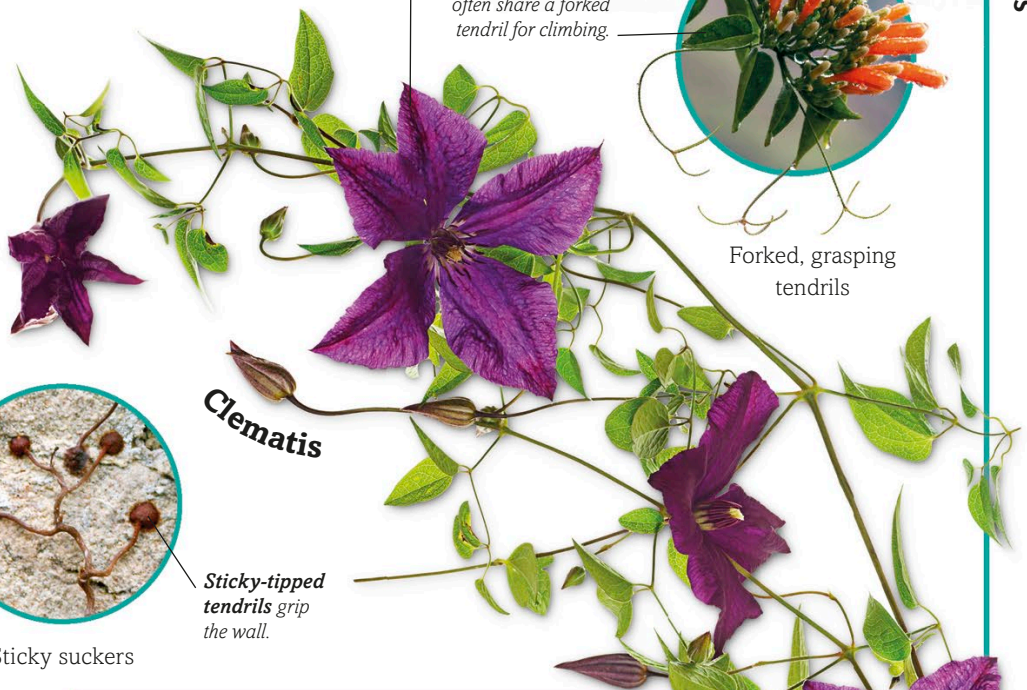
English ivy

Root clusters on the stem allow this vine to climb to a height of 98 ft (30 m).



Gripping roots

Large, colorful flowers make this climber popular with gardeners.



Clematis

Sticky-tipped tendrils grip the wall.

Sticky suckers



TWINING STEMS

Plants cannot see so use their tendrils to find something to cling to. Some detect the shade of a nearby object, while others detect chemical signals given off by other plants.



1. Tendril extends outward.



2. It revolves until an object is detected.



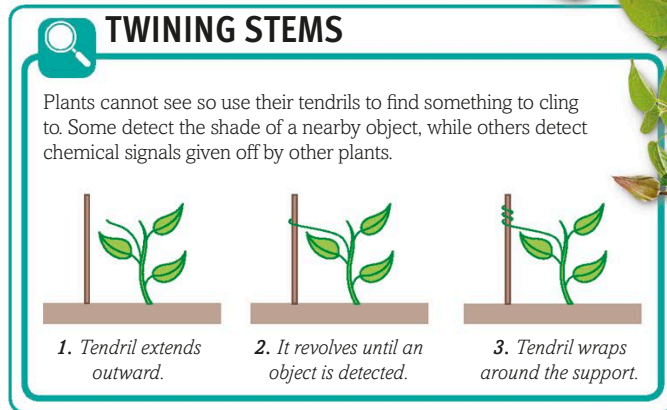
3. Tendril wraps around the support.

Virginia creeper, and **flame vine** produce fine tendrils that seek out something to cling to. The stems of **English ivy** sprout clusters of fingerlike aerial roots that burrow into the crevices of the bark, wall, or fence the plant is climbing up. These powerful roots grip so hard, they are difficult to remove and can damage houses and smother trees.



Virginia creeper

The palm-shaped leaves turn bright red in fall.



Flame vine

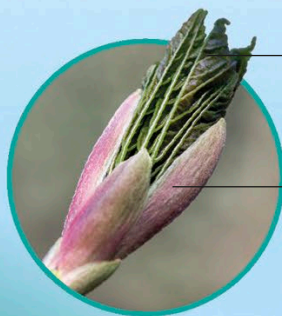
Two leaflets often share a forked tendril for climbing.



Forked, grasping tendrils



Bursting buds ▶ Leaves and new stems sprout from buds that protect the soft, delicate tissue from winter frosts. The new growth makes the bud burst open.



Leaf is tightly folded inside the bud but soon bursts out.

Bud scales are tough and weatherproof.

Norway maple

Spring

As the weather gets warmer in spring, leaves begin to sprout from buds on the branches. The green leaves use sunlight to make food for the tree to grow and produce flowers.

Summer

Long days of sunlight allow the tree to make lots of food, and the tree is thick with leaves and yellow flowers, which are cross-pollinated primarily by bees. When fertilized, the flowers will become fruits and seeds will form.

Through the seasons

A deciduous tree, such as this Norway maple, has a cycle of growth that follows the seasons.

What is a tree?

Of all the plants, trees are the biggest and live the longest. Instead of green stems, they have woody trunks, which usually divide into many branches. The woody tissue is very strong, allowing some trees to grow to incredible heights of 330 ft (100 m) or more. A network of roots anchors the tree to the ground and draws up water and nutrients from the soil.



Fall

As the days get colder and shorter, the tree stops making food. The chlorophyll that makes the leaves green begins to break down, and they change from green to red and gold and fall from the tree.

Winter

In the cold winter months, the branches are bare and the tree lies dormant, preserving its energy and water until the following spring.

Deciduous or evergreen?



**Deciduous tree
in fall**

*Leaves change
from green to red.*



**Evergreen
tree**

There are two main types of trees. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in winter as they stop growing. In spring, they produce thin leaves that make food efficiently, so the tree grows fast in summer. Evergreen trees have tougher leaves that make food more slowly but stay on the tree all year long.

Trunk rings

The tough outer bark protects the layer of growing plant tissue beneath it.

Wide, pale rings form in spring, while narrow, dark rings form later in the year.

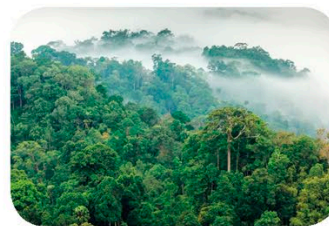
The heartwood at the center is the oldest part of the tree.

**Cross section
of a tree trunk**

Every year, a tree's trunk grows broader as a layer of woody tissue is added beneath the bark. The tissue grows fastest in spring, making softer wood, and more slowly late in the year, making harder wood. This forms annual growth rings, which are revealed if the tree is cut down.

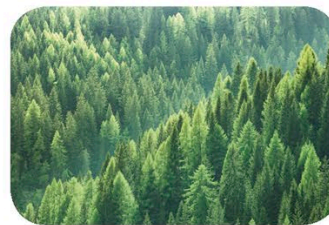
Types of forests

Where there is enough rainfall for trees to grow in large numbers, they can form dense forests. The type of forest depends on the nature of the trees, which is determined by the climate.



Rain forest

In wet climates with no winter frosts, trees grow all year round to create rain forests. These are mostly found around the tropics.



Coniferous

The forests that grow in cold northern climates are mostly made up of tough evergreen conifer trees, such as pines and spruces.



Deciduous

Regions with long summers and short winters have forests of deciduous trees. They lose their leaves in fall but grow new ones in spring.

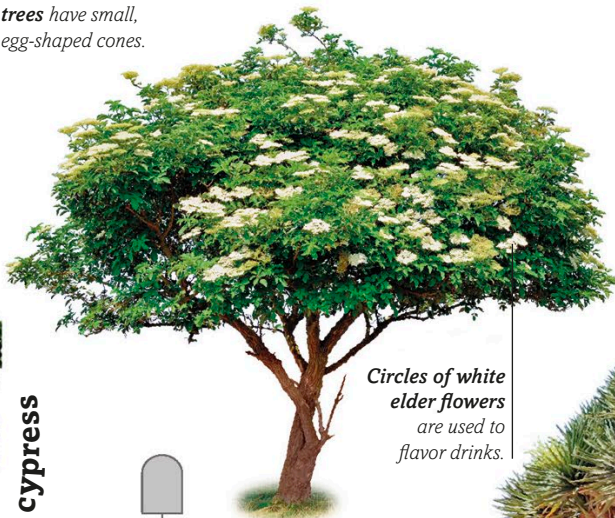


Types of trees



Mediterranean cypress

Tall, columnlike trees have small, egg-shaped cones.



Broad Elderberry

Circles of white elder flowers are used to flavor drinks.



Columnar

Ginkgo



Broad

These tall trees can grow to 147 ft (45 m) in height.



Broad



Sugar maple

Stiff evergreen leaves grow in clusters at the ends of branches.



Dragon's blood tree

Autumnal yellow leaves all fall within a few days of each other.

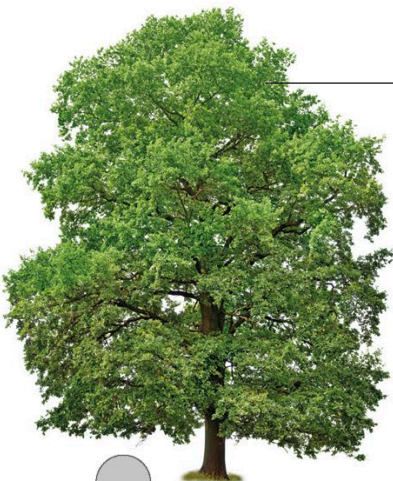


Spreading

The bark of a dragon's blood tree "bleeds" a blood-red sap when cut.

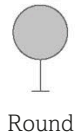
Trees come in all shapes and sizes, depending on the conditions they live in. Trees in leaf all year round, with old ones constantly replaced by new ones, are called evergreen. Trees that lose all their leaves for part of the year are called deciduous.

Most evergreen trees are conifers, nonflowering plants such as the **Mediterranean cypress** and **Nordmann fir**. However, some flowering trees with tough leaves are evergreen, too. The **eucalyptus**, for example, has tough leaves with an oily coating to keep in water, which hang vertically,



This long-lived tree can survive for more than 1,000 years.

English oak



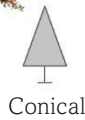
Round

Slow-growing branches extend about 1 1/2 in (4 cm) a year.



Bright red berries provide winter food for birds.

European holly



Conical

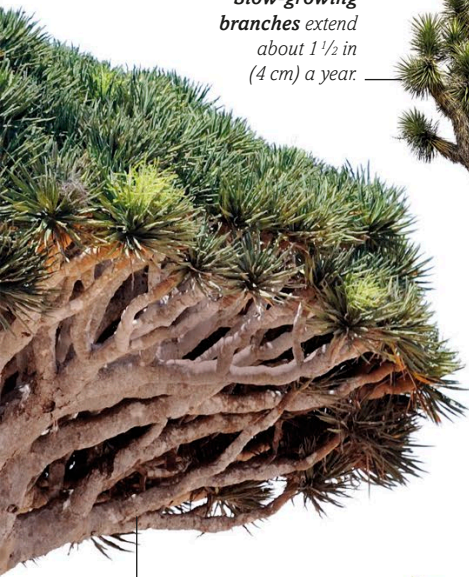


Coconut palm



Palm

Each needlelike leaf on this tree is up to 1 1/4 in (3.5 cm) long.



This umbrella-like tree can grow up to 33 ft (10 m) in height.

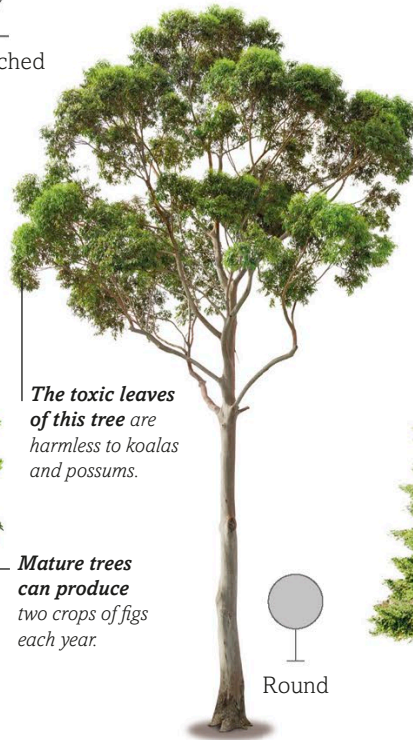


Divided leaves allow harsh coastal winds to whip through without breaking the tree.



Branched

Joshua tree



The toxic leaves of this tree are harmless to koalas and possums.

Mature trees can produce two crops of figs each year.



Spreading

Common fig



Round

Eucalyptus



Nordmann fir



Conical

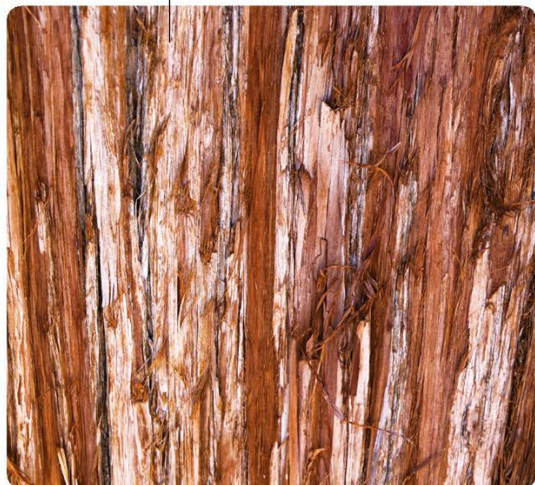
reducing exposure to the sun during the Australian summers. Palms, such as the **coconut palm**, that grow in wet, warm tropical climates are also evergreen. Deciduous trees shed their leaves for part of the year, when conditions are too hot, cold, or dry. The **common fig** loses its leaves to survive

the dry season, while the **elderberry**, **ginkgo**, **sugar maple**, and **English oak** grow in regions with mild summers but lose their leaves to help them survive cold winters. While **holly** lives in the same climate as these trees, its leathery evergreen leaves are able to tolerate the frosty winter.



Barking up the tree

The red-brown bark can be up to 11 in (30 cm) thick.



Fibrous
(Coast redwood)

The green inner bark turns blue, purple, and orange when exposed to the air.



Vertical stripes
(Manchurian striped maple)

The bright green bark with white stripes is easily damaged in strong sunlight.



Spiny
(Silk floss)

Cone-shaped spines protect this greenish gray bark against animals.

Unusual rectangular plates make it easy to identify a persimmon tree's bark.



Plates
(Persimmon)

This smooth gray bark can be infected by deadly fungi.



Smooth
(American beech)

Bark is the woody “skin” that protects the trunks of trees and stems of shrubs, forming a barrier against disease and grazing animals, while keeping water in. Bark is essentially dead tissue—a tough layer formed as the living cells underneath it die and are replaced.

Tree bark comes in many different patterns and textures and is vital to the health of a tree. The fibrous bark of the **coast redwood** is extremely fire-resistant, while the spines on **silk floss** bark deter any hungry animals from eating the young branches. Since all trunks need air to



Peeling strips (Rainbow eucalyptus)



Mottled
(American sycamore)

Blotchy bark flakes off in large chunks.

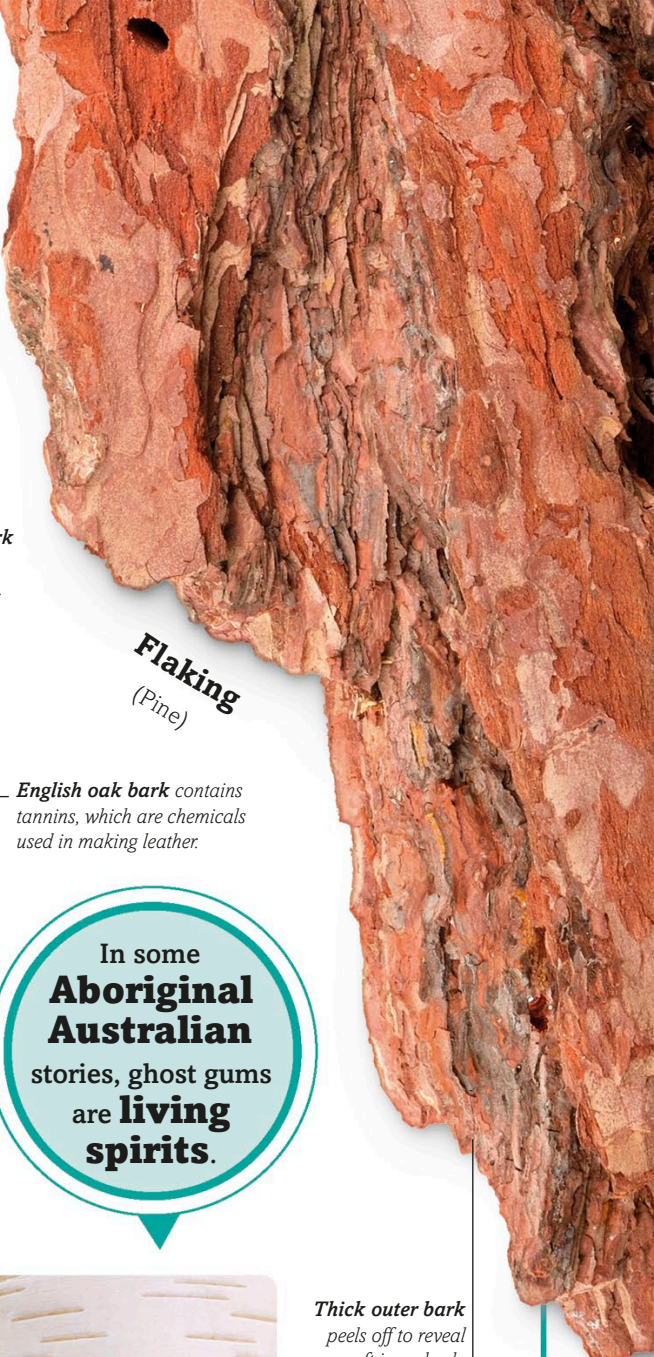
Diamond-shaped pores join each other to form channels in older trees.



Diamond lenticels
(White poplar)



Horizontally broken ridges (English oak)



Flaking
(Pine)

English oak bark contains tannins, which are chemicals used in making leather.

In some **Aboriginal Australian** stories, ghost gums are **living spirits**.

Deep cracks develop in the bark as the tree ages.



Intersecting ridges
(Crack willow)

Rough lenticels break up the shiny, coppery brown bark.



Horizontal lenticels
(Tibetan cherry)



White
(Ghost gum)

Thick outer bark peels off to reveal soft inner bark.

Powdery, white bark reflects the heat of the strong Australian sun.

survive, trees such as **white poplar** and **Tibetan cherry** develop spongy cracks called lenticels in their bark to let air pass through. Some bark naturally splits as the tree grows, revealing the inner layer beneath. This produces beautiful patterns on the **Manchurian striped maple**, the **rainbow eucalyptus**, and the

American sycamore. Trees can die if their bark is severely damaged. Mountain pine beetles can introduce a fungus under the bark of a **pine** tree to weaken it, allowing their eggs to hatch and the larvae to eat the living layer under the bark. The pine tree releases sticky resin to defend itself against these insects.



STANDING TALL North America's Pacific Coast is densely forested, with millions of conifer trees growing in the cool, wet conditions on the west side of the Rocky Mountains. Massive trees thrive in this climate, such as this old-growth redwood in California's Bear Creek Watershed. In the distance is Rockefeller Forest, the world's oldest continuous old-growth redwood forest, measuring more than 15 sq miles (40 sq km).



This tree may seem huge compared to its surroundings, but the title for the world's tallest tree goes to Hyperion that stands at 380 ft (116 m)—or about twice the height of the Statue of Liberty in New York City. The exact whereabouts of Hyperion, a coastal redwood, remains a closely guarded secret, and there are no confirmed

photographs of it. However, we do know it lies somewhere in Northern California's Cascade Range, a part of the Redwood National Park, which also houses Helios and Icarus, the second and third tallest trees. Despite its jaw-dropping height, the 600–800-year-old Hyperion was not found until 2006, as it grows in a valley that hides its height from clear view.



Blossom time

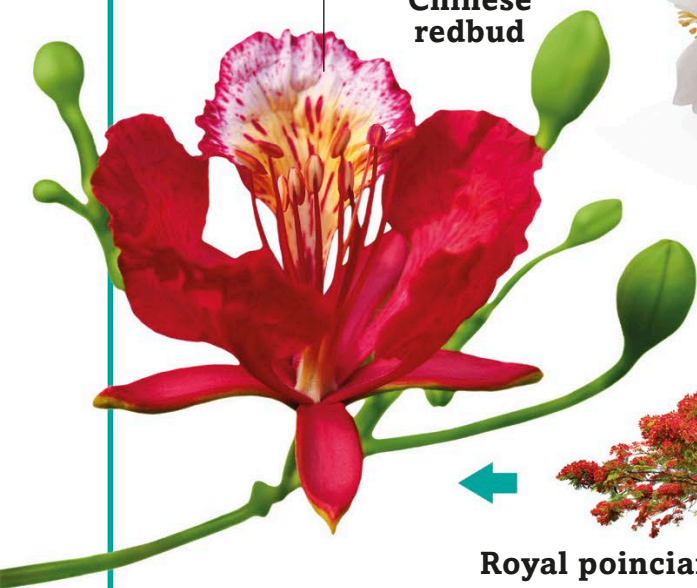


Pink flowers grow in clusters in spring, and produce purple seed pods.



This upright petal guides pollinators to the nectar.

Chinese redbud



Royal poinciana

These beautiful flowering branches spread out and provide shade in hot, tropical environments.



Laburnum



Showers of yellow flowers give this tree its other name, "golden rain."



Mock orange

The fragrant flowers of this shrub contain oils used in perfumes.



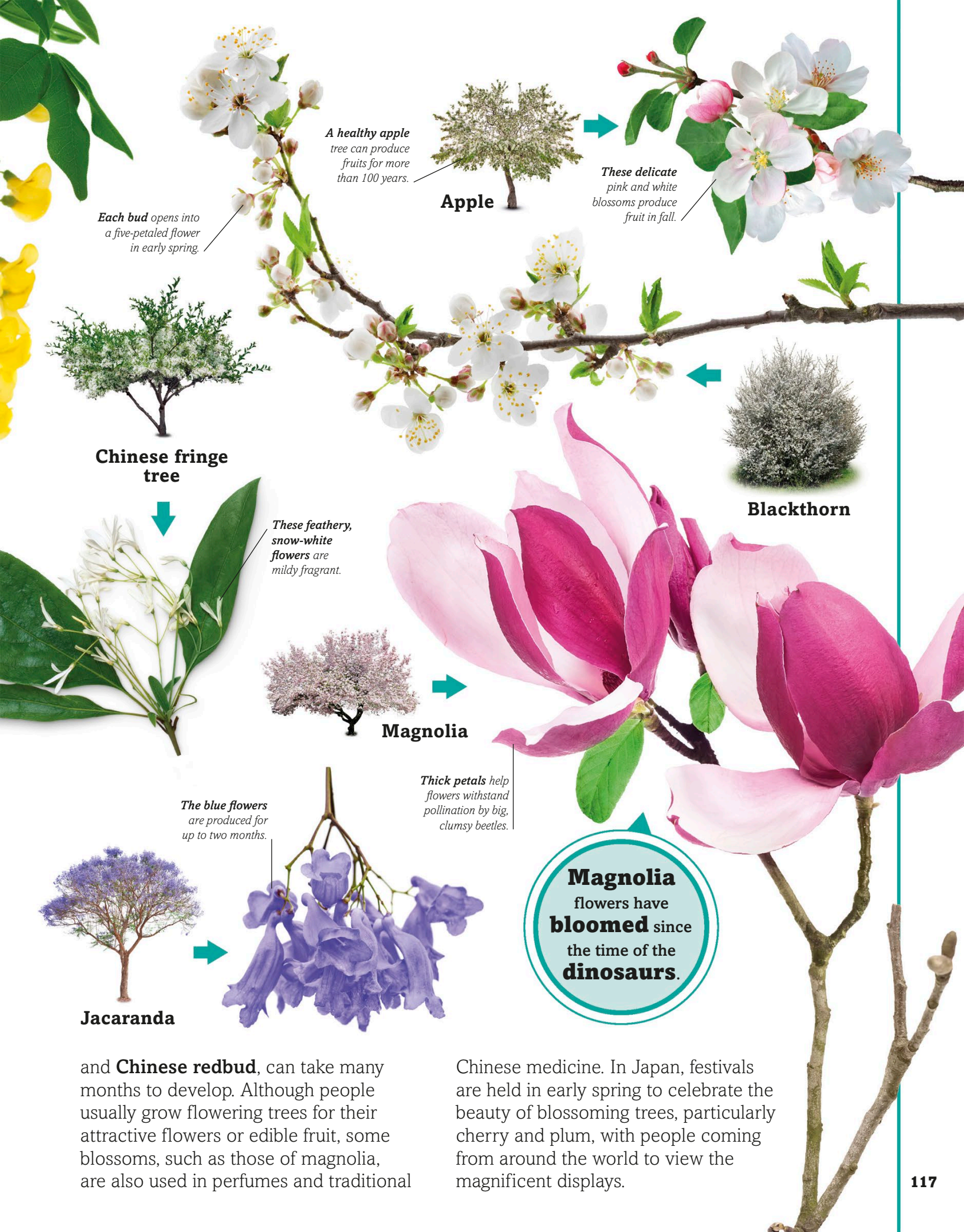
NATURAL DYE

In 2018, scientists created a natural dye using the bright red flowers of the royal poinciana tree. This dye can be used to color silk and cotton fabrics.



Blossom is the name for the flowers that grow on trees and bushes, which often produce colorful displays in spring and summer. Changes in temperature and day length signal to the plant when to bloom. When pollinated, blossoms grow into fruits.

Some trees, such as **blackthorn** and **magnolia**, begin to flower even before their leaves unfurl, which may help pollinators find their flowers more easily. After pollination, fruits such as **mock oranges** and **apples**, as well as seed pods of trees such as **laburnum**



A healthy apple tree can produce fruits for more than 100 years.

Apple

These delicate pink and white blossoms produce fruit in fall.

Each bud opens into a five-petaled flower in early spring.

Chinese fringe tree

These feathery, snow-white flowers are mildly fragrant.

Blackthorn

Magnolia

Thick petals help flowers withstand pollination by big, clumsy beetles.

The blue flowers are produced for up to two months.

Jacaranda

Magnolia
flowers have **bloomed** since the time of the **dinosaurs**.

and **Chinese redbud**, can take many months to develop. Although people usually grow flowering trees for their attractive flowers or edible fruit, some blossoms, such as those of magnolia, are also used in perfumes and traditional

Chinese medicine. In Japan, festivals are held in early spring to celebrate the beauty of blossoming trees, particularly cherry and plum, with people coming from around the world to view the magnificent displays.

Living on air

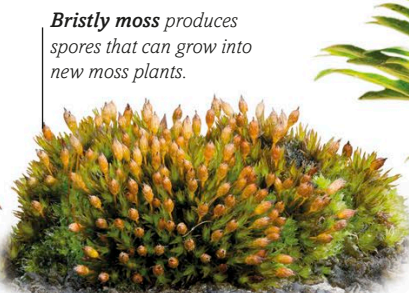


Tillandsia
air plant

Silvery leaves hang in chains.



Spanish moss



Bristly moss produces spores that can grow into new moss plants.

Orthotrichum moss

These stiff leaves are specially adapted to absorb moisture from the air.



Bird's nest fern

The undivided fronds grow up to 59 in (150 cm) in length.



Fissidens moss

Dense cushions of this moss grow in shady, damp areas.

Forked fronds like a deer's antlers give this plant its name.



Staghorn fern

Not all plants grow in soil. Some, known as epiphytes, anchor themselves onto other plants or tree trunks instead. These plants do not take nutrients from their hosts, however; they absorb water and nutrients from the air and rain, or sometimes from the dead leaves that collect around their base.

Mosses such as **fissidens moss** or **orthotrichum moss** can often be seen growing on walls or tree trunks. These tiny plants survive by storing water like a sponge. They then use this water to make food. **Spanish moss** is not really a moss at all, but a flowering plant. It is one of about

Necklace orchid



Long strings of flowers have a sweet scent to attract insect pollinators.

Frogs, insects, and even crabs can be found living in bromeliad pools.



Waterproof leaves come in many colors and collect pools of water at their center.



Bromeliad

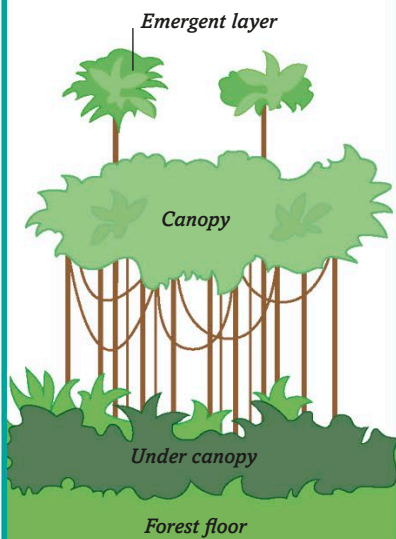
These yellow flowers resemble the golden gowns of dancing ladies, giving this orchid its name.



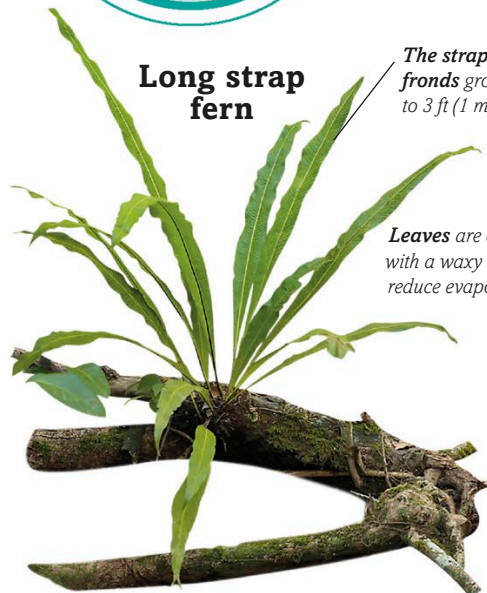
Dancing ladies orchid

LIVING LAYERS

Rain forests are divided into four layers, each with its own unique set of plants and animals. Fungi living on the dark forest floor break down plant matter. Shrubs and bushes in the under canopy shelter small animals and predators in the shadow of a full, leafy canopy, which is home to birds and climbing animals. Emergent trees tower above all others, housing high fliers such as eagles and bats.



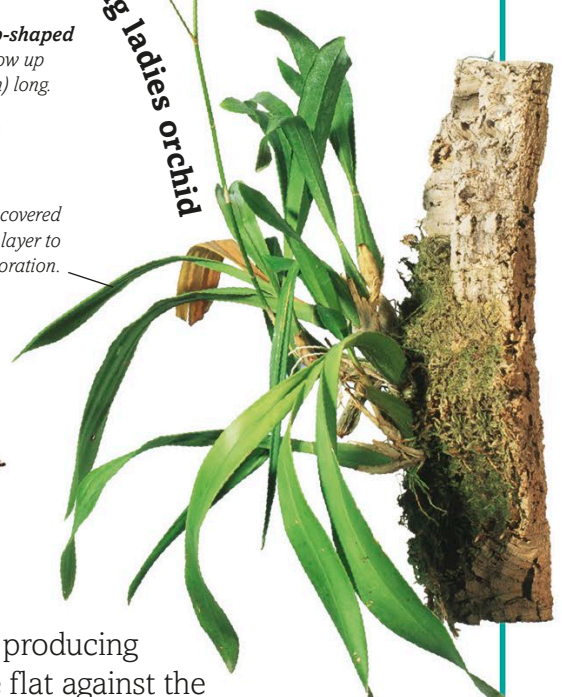
Male bees attack the orchid, mistaking it for a rival, and pollinating it as they do so.



Long strap fern

The strap-shaped fronds grow up to 3 ft (1 m) long.

Leaves are covered with a waxy layer to reduce evaporation.



650 plants known as air plants. They take their name from their ability to use their leaves to absorb water from the air around them. Many epiphytic **orchids** grow in humid environments such as rain forests. They collect moisture from the air, too, but use fleshy roots to do this, rather than their leaves. The **staghorn fern** also uses its roots to take in water from its humid

environment, producing fronds that lie flat against the tree trunk to prevent them from drying out. The crowns of fronds at the top of this plant and other epiphytic ferns, such as the **bird's nest fern** and the **long strap fern**, also collect water and falling leaves, which provide much-needed nutrients for these plants.





STRANGLER FIG In Wat Mahathat, a Buddhist monastery in Ayutthaya, Thailand, a strangler fig wraps around the head of a broken Buddha statue. This type of fig starts life as a small seed dropped on a tree branch by an animal, such as a bird.

After germinating, the seedling's roots grow down the trunk of the tree, absorbing nutrients from soil deposits on the branches. Once they reach the ground, they burrow into the soil, helping the strangler fig to develop faster and send its shoots stretching higher for sunlight. Many roots wrap around the host tree, enclosing its trunk in a network that thickens and tightens as it grows, sometimes even killing the tree. Strangler figs grow over anything that gets in their way, including walls and entire houses.



The forest floor

In temperate forests, plant life has to adapt to the four seasons. Flowers must shoot up early in the spring, before the trees start growing leaves blocking the sunlight. Then plants that have evolved to live in the shade take over, such as ferns and mosses, surviving on the little light that filters through.



Squill

Bell-shaped flowers carpet forest floors in western Europe in spring.



Wood anemone

These star-shaped flowers have a musky smell.



Hosta

Flower stems are held above the leaves to attract pollinators.



Calypso orchid

Cushions of moss can reach 4 in (10 cm) in height.



Broom forkmoss

The hairs attract insects for pollination, but this orchid does not produce nutritious nectar.

Lady's slipper orchid



The pouch-shaped petals force insects to brush past the yellow pollen above, aiding pollination.

These edible leaves have a garlicky smell and flavor.

Wild garlic



The **wood anemone** is one of the first flowers to emerge in early spring. **Squill** and **wild garlic** soon follow, shooting up from underground bulbs and soaking up sunlight with their long leaves before the trees above burst into leaf. These plants are known as “spring ephemerals” because they spend just a few weeks in bloom before dying back, ready for next spring. The **large-flowered**

trillium survives like this for up to 70 years. Enclosed by a thick green canopy of leaves, the forest floor is dark, cool, and damp throughout the summer, ideal conditions for **sword ferns** and **mosses** to grow. In autumn the leaves fall from the trees, insulating the earth in the colder months and building up a thick layer of matter to enrich the soil.



Sword fern

Each pinna (leaflet) has a lobe that sticks up at its base, giving it the shape of a sword hilt.



Fawn lily

Six tepals grow around the anthers. The tepals curl back toward the stalk to advertise the flower to pollinators.

Large-flowered trillium

A striped bract surrounds and covers each flower spike.

This plant is **poisonous** but, if cooked properly, its root can be made into **bread**.

The three-petaled flowers first appear when this plant is 7–10 years old.



Pincushion moss

Dense clumps grow slowly but can reach 3 ft (1 m) wide. Each leaf is no more than 1/3 in (9 mm) long.

Jack-in-the-pulpit





Bonsai



Crab apple

Each miniature apple is up to $\frac{7}{8}$ in (1 cm) across, about one-fifth the size of a regular crab apple.



The **smallest bonsai** grows just **2 in** (5 cm) tall.



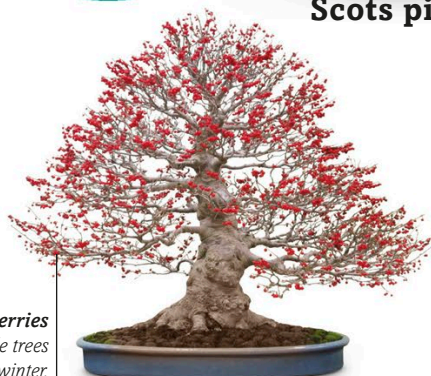
Scots pine

Dense growth on top makes this a favorite among bonsai lovers.

Satsuki azalea



These funnel-shaped flowers can range from under $\frac{1}{8}$ in (2 cm) to $6\frac{3}{4}$ in (17 cm) across.



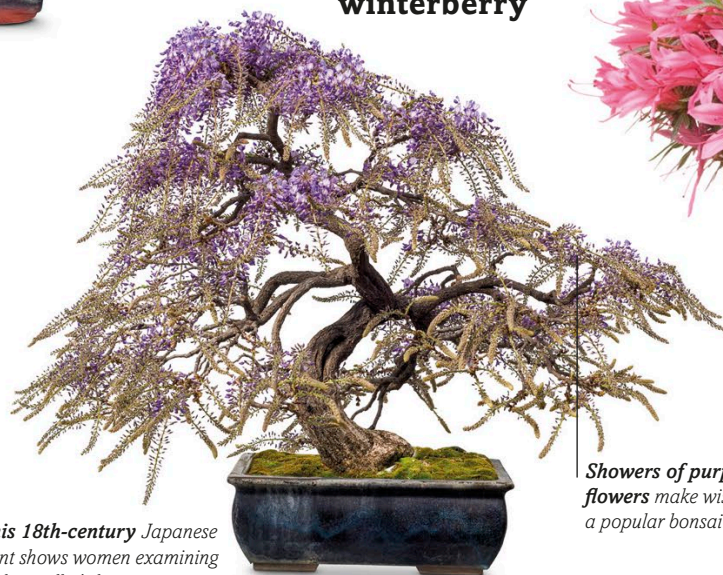
Japanese winterberry

Bright red berries cover female trees throughout the winter.



Bonsai seller

This 18th-century Japanese print shows women examining a plant seller's bonsai.



Japanese wisteria

Showers of purple flowers make wisteria a popular bonsai vine.

The word “bonsai” means “planted in a container” and is the Asian art of growing miniature trees. The small pot helps restrict growth, while the branches are skillfully pruned to keep the plant small and mimic the natural shape of the full-size tree.

Although they usually reach a height of only 5–10 in (13–25 cm), bonsai trees bear flowers and fruit. Some species, such as the **Japanese wisteria** and **satsuki azalea**, are particularly popular for their beautiful displays of flowers, while others, including **crab apples** and **dwarf pomegranates**, produce tiny fruits. Bonsai



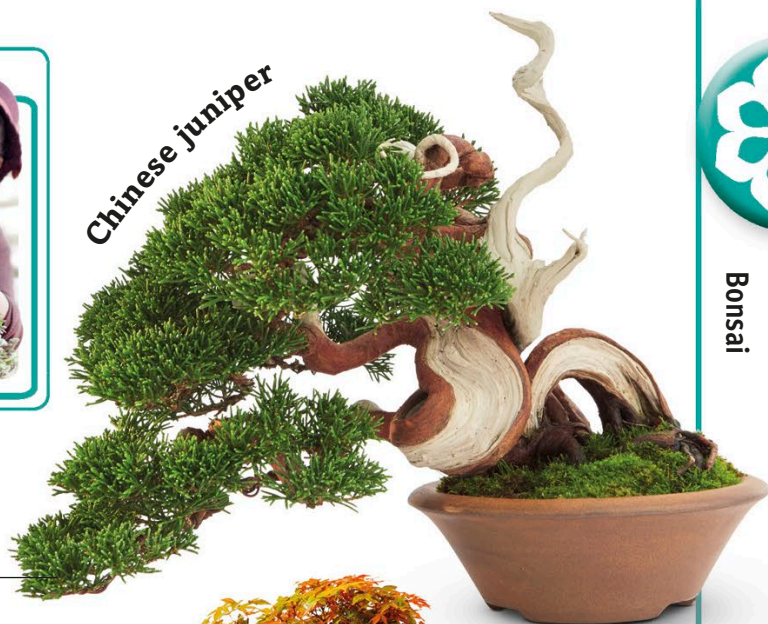
PRUNING A BONSAI

Special scissors are used to trim bonsai branches in order to make an attractive tree shape, while preventing the trees from growing too quickly.



Dramatic shapes are created by pruning or twisting branches around wires, which are later removed.

Chinese juniper



Fall leaves make a colorful display popular with bonsai enthusiasts.

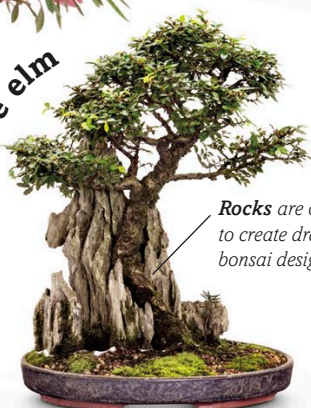


Japanese maple

Pink, white, red, or purple blossoms usually bloom in May, which is called "satsuki" in Japanese—giving this tree its name.

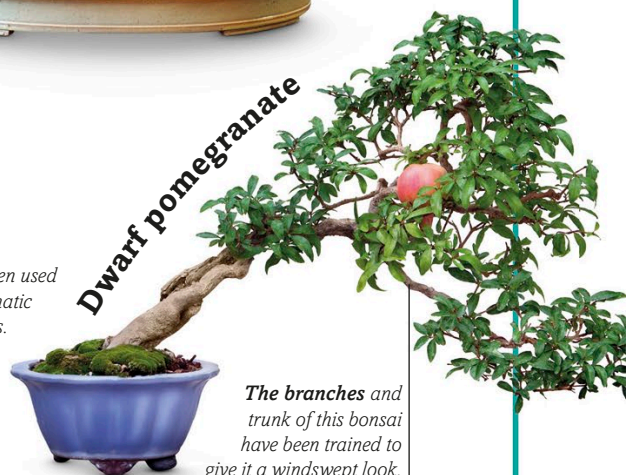


Chinese elm



Rocks are often used to create dramatic bonsai designs.

Dwarf pomegranate



The branches and trunk of this bonsai have been trained to give it a windswept look.

requires careful pruning of the shoots and roots, and it takes skill not to kill the trees in the process. The **Chinese elm** bonsai is more likely to survive mistakes made by beginners. One **Chinese juniper** in Japan has been proven to be about 1,000 years

old, with centuries of careful pruning and shaping by bonsai masters. With enough time and care, a bonsai tree can become extremely valuable. The most expensive bonsai ever sold was in 2011. It had a price tag of 100,000,000 Japanese yen, equivalent to around \$1.3 million (£840,000).





What is a grass?

Grasses are short plants with long, narrow leaves, jointed stems, and flowers that are almost always arranged in spikes. This group of plants first appeared on land more than 66 million years ago, evolving over time into the 12,000 species of grasses today. Grasses cover huge areas of land on every continent and are more widely spread than any other type of plant.



Grass flowers

Meadow foxtail flower



Anthers poke out of the flowers and bob in the wind, releasing pollen grains.

Grasses produce flower spikes with many small flowers, which are wind-pollinated. As they mature, each flower dangles its anthers in the wind, allowing millions of pollen grains to be blown away to fertilize the feathery, sticky stigmas of another grass. Since grasses do not have to attract animal pollinators, their flowers have lost their colorful petals.

Growing point ➤ Grasses can survive continual grazing by wild and farm animals because their growing point is at the base of their stem, close to the soil. When nibbling animals eat the leaves, they leave this growing point intact, allowing the plant to regrow easily.



Leaf blade ➤ Many grasses have long, thin leaves with parallel veins running down the length of each blade. Each new leaf emerges from within the base of the older blade.

Sweet vernal grass

Roots ➤ Grasses have very dense root systems that hold the plant in place even when being tugged at by large grazing animals. These root clusters also hold the soil together, preventing erosion.

Leaf sheaths grow at the base of each grass leaf. Wrapped around the stem, leaf sheaths prevent stems from breaking and also protect the growing point.

Grass imposters

Rush

This snowy woodrush has long, thin leaves that may look like those of a grass, but it is actually a rush and belongs to a related family of plants.



Seagrass

These seagrasses live on the ocean floor, providing an important habitat and food source for a wide range of fish and other marine life.

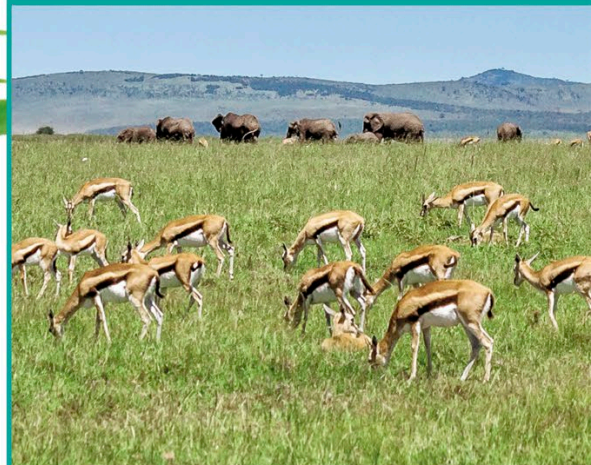


Sedge

Sedges are wetland plants with grasslike leaves, but you can tell them apart from grasses and rushes by their triangular stems.



Grasslands



Grassland habitats cover about a third of all land on Earth. They are found in regions too dry to support a forest but too wet to be a desert. From African savannas to North American prairies to European meadows, grasslands support a huge variety of wildlife around the world, such as the Grant's gazelles seen here. Wildfires often sweep across grasslands, encouraging thick grass regrowth and removing tree seedlings.



Types of grasses

When you think of grass, you might picture a garden lawn, but there are thousands of very different species, including crops such as rice and even bamboo. They may not be the most colorful plants, but they are some of the most important. Grasses grow in habitats around the world, including deserts, mountains, and rain forests.

Clumping bamboo

The blue-gray leaves grow in clumps up to 7 1/4 in (20 cm) in height.



Blue fescue

Antarctic hair grass



This tiny grass is one of two flowering plants native to Antarctica.

Grasslands
make up around
one-third
of all land
on Earth.

Divided flower stems look like a crow's foot, giving this grass its name.



Crowfoot grass

Grasslike leaves grow from woody stems, unlike other grasses.



Although most grasses look similar, some have unique features that make them stand out. While **bamboos** grow woody stems that allow some species to reach up to 160 ft (50 m) in height, the **Antarctic hair grass** lives in such a harsh, cold climate that it grows only a few centimeters tall. Most grasses come in shades of green, but some are popular for

their colors, such as the red leaves of the **Japanese bloodgrass** and the blue-gray foliage of the **blue fescue**. The red flower spikes of the **hair-awn muhly grass** add a splash of color to gardens, while many people grow **pampas grass** for their tall, feathery flower spikes, which blow in the wind.



These fluffy flower tufts are popular with gardeners.

Hares-tail grass

TALL AND USEFUL

Elephant grass can grow into a tall plant quickly, without needing much water or food. Thriving even in poor soil conditions, African elephant grass is used as fodder for cattle and elephants. It is also planted to prevent soil erosion in dry or overgrazed lands. Scientists have explored the use of the Asian variety of this grass as a biofuel, burning it to produce electricity.



13 ft (4 m)

The flattened flower spikes are just 1/3 in (1 cm) long.

Spangle grass

Flower spikes look like fluffy pink clouds.

Hair-awn muhly grass



Soft flower spikes look like gray bottle brushes.

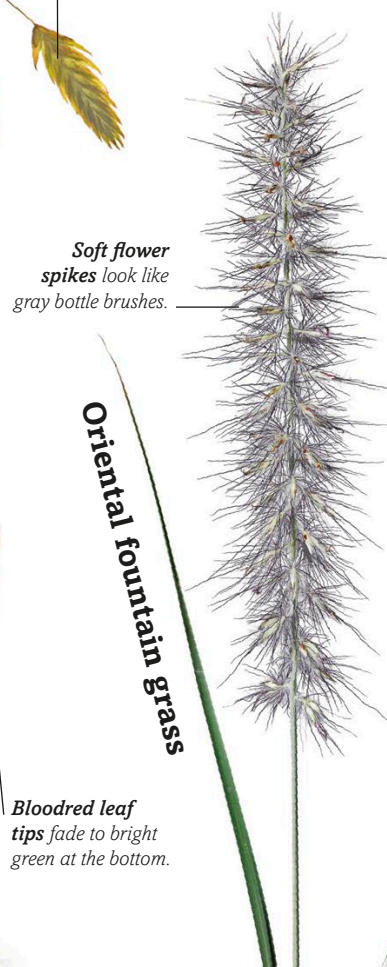
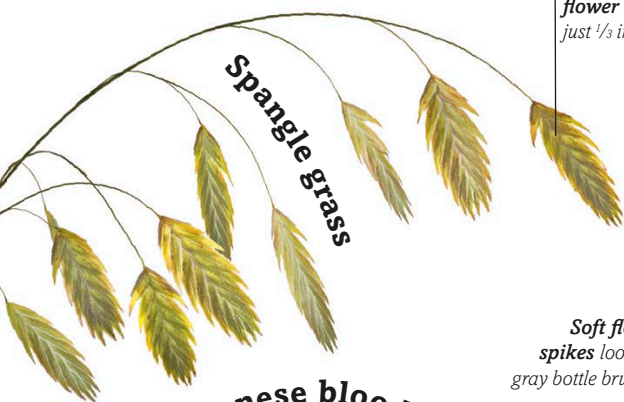
Oriental fountain grass

Japanese bloodgrass

This tall grass can reach 9 3/4 in (3 m) in height.

Pampas grass

Bloodred leaf tips fade to bright green at the bottom.





Grasses and grains

Grasses produce the grains that feed the world. Grasses with edible seeds or grains are known as cereal plants and have been cultivated for thousands of years. Today, cereals are harvested on a massive scale around the world.



Sugarcane

Oats are usually crushed and made into porridge.

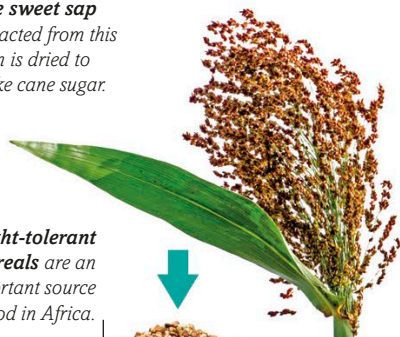
When ready to harvest, sugarcane can be twice the height of a grown man.

The sweet sap extracted from this stem is dried to make cane sugar.

Drought-tolerant cereals are an important source of food in Africa.



Oat grains



Sorghum grains



Crystals of sugar

Sorghum



Oat



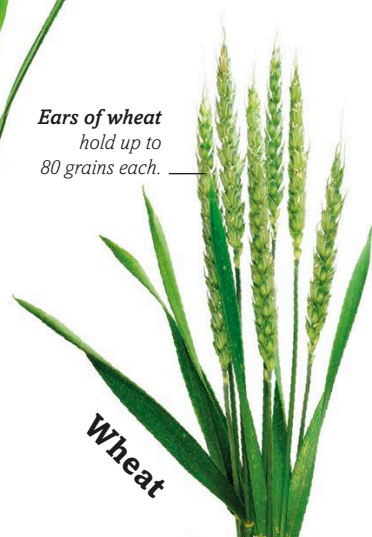
Grains of rice



Rice

This wetland plant is grown in watery fields called paddies.

Ears of wheat hold up to 80 grains each.



Wheat

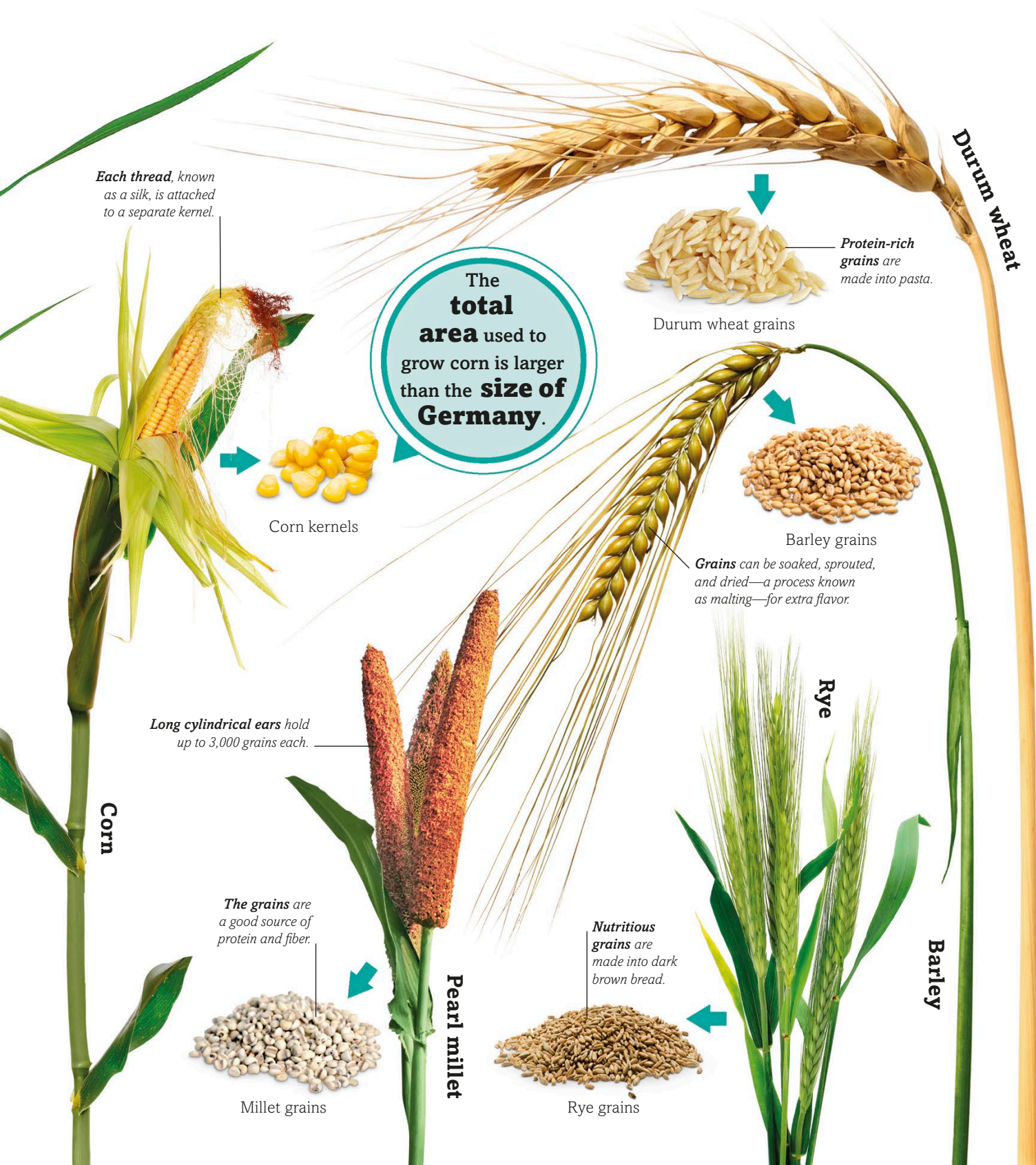


Wheat grains



The most widely grown cereal plant is **corn**. Corn kernels are mainly used as cattle feed, or turned into a liquid biofuel called ethanol. Next comes **rice**, an essential food crop for more than half of the people on the planet, especially in Asia. **Wheat**, the third most important grain, is usually ground into flour and used to make bread

and pasta. **Barley**, which comes fourth, is used both for food and to make alcoholic drinks. Fifth is **sugarcane**, a large grass grown for its sweet sap, which is extracted by crushing the stems. The syrupy liquid is evaporated until it is so concentrated that it will harden when cooled, and the resulting solid is ground up into sugar crystals.





RICE TERRACES A rice farmer working on these spectacular, lush-green fields needs a good head for heights. The precisely stepped staircases, which rise almost vertically in some parts, are located about 174 miles (280 km) from Vietnam's capital city, Hanoi. One of the world's most widely consumed foods, rice is grown all over southeast Asia and is hugely important to the economy of many countries.



These layered rice fields in the Mu Cang Chai district of northeastern Vietnam were carved out of the mountainsides hundreds of years ago. With simple hand tools, early farmers labored to make use of every scrap of fertile land. Today, the terraces produce much of the country's rice. Covering about 4,900 acres (2,000 hectares), the plants change color from

green to gold with the seasons. Growing rice is still hard work, even today. It is difficult to use machinery on such a steep incline so work is done by hand. After planting, farmers are constantly weeding, and in the run up to harvest, the terraces are kept flooded with stream water carried by farmers down the mountains in bamboo pipes.



What is a fruit?

A fruit develops from a plant's fertilized flower. It encloses and protects the seeds while they develop, then helps to spread them. The sweet flesh of most fruits encourages animals—including humans—to eat them, spreading their seeds in the process.

Strawberry

A ripe strawberry is bright red, and packed with vitamins and nutrients.

Kiwi

Seed > Most fleshy fruits, such as this kiwi, develop as a tasty package to hold the seeds. Fleshy fruits often change color as they ripen so that animals can spot and eat them, dispersing their seeds.

Tasty bananas come ready-wrapped in a tough protective skin.

Banana

Bananas are a type of berry, but most have been bred to not contain seeds.

What is a vegetable?

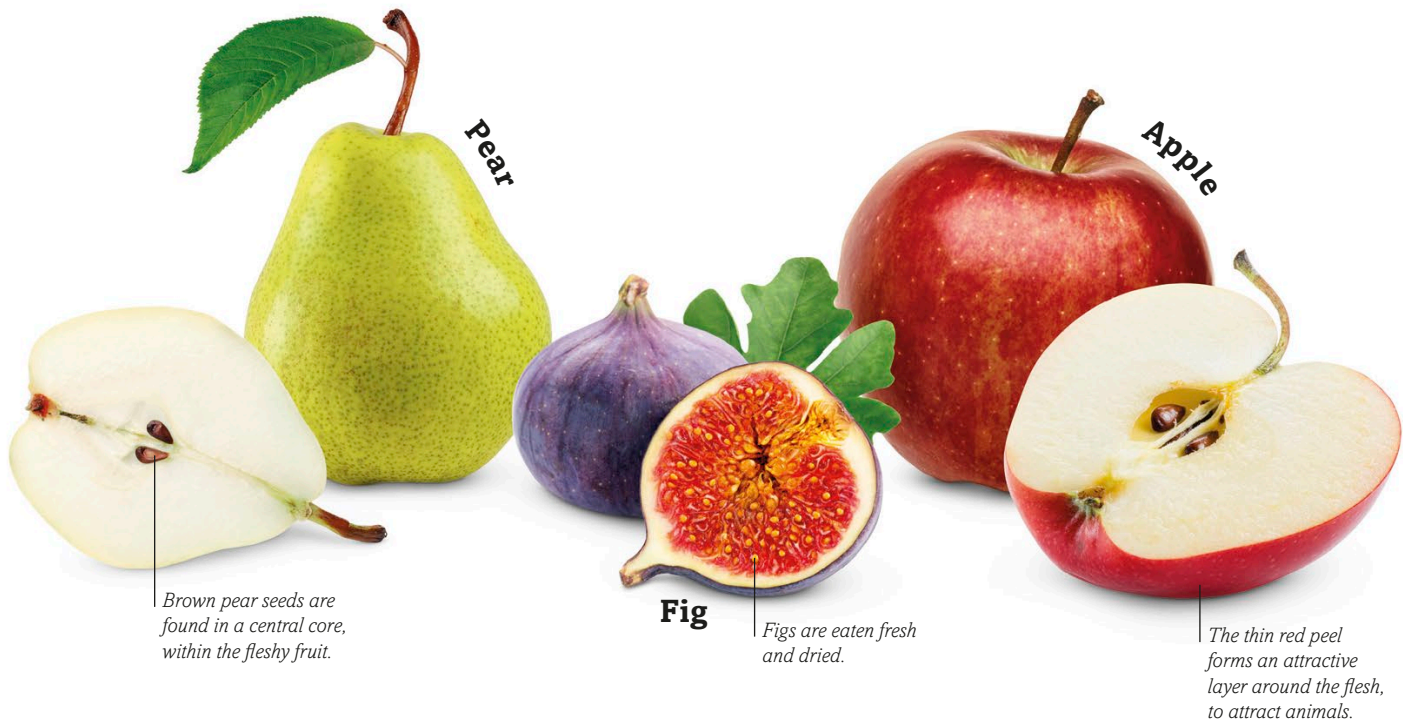
Vegetables are any edible part of a plant except for the fruit. We eat fleshy roots, succulent stems, flowers, buds, and leaves. Because all these parts of the plant are making or storing food, they are rich in vitamins, which make them good food for us.

Carrot

Root > A root vegetable is the underground part of the plant. It can be the plant's food store in the winter and contains starch, sugar, and vitamins. High in nutrients and fiber, edible roots are an important part of a healthy diet.

Cabbage

Leaf > A leaf makes food and so contains energy and minerals. The fiber in leaves that makes them sturdy helps human digestion.



Brown pear seeds are found in a central core, within the fleshy fruit.

Fig

Figs are eaten fresh and dried.

The thin red peel forms an attractive layer around the flesh, to attract animals.

Fruit or vegetable?

Any part of a plant we eat is either a fruit or a vegetable. Fruits develop from fertilized flowers, and contain seeds that are spread when they are eaten. Any edible part of the plant that is not a fruit is a vegetable. This can be a root, a stem, a leaf, or even the buds of developing flowers.



Asparagus

Stem ➤ A stem transports food to and from the roots of a plant and is full of minerals. When stems are soft enough, they can be eaten as vegetables, raw or cooked.

False fruits and vegetables

We often use the terms “fruit” and “vegetable,” based on how we eat plants—in sweet or savory dishes—rather than how they grow. So, a sweet-tasting vegetable is sometimes called a fruit, while a savory salad fruit may be called a vegetable!



Rhubarb is an example of a false fruit. It is actually a stem vegetable.



A tomato is an example of a false vegetable. It is actually a fruit.



Going underground



These underground stems grow at the bottom of ponds.

Arrowhead



Dandelion

This plant's bitter roots are used to treat many illnesses.



Beet

The red juice from beets is used as a natural food coloring.

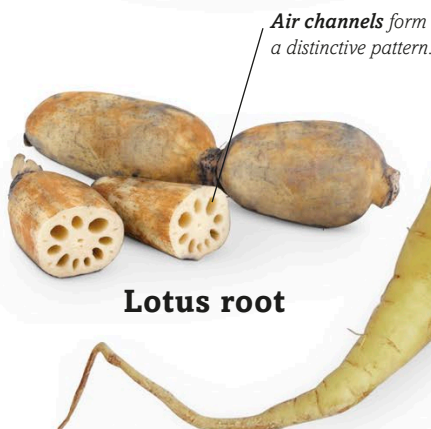
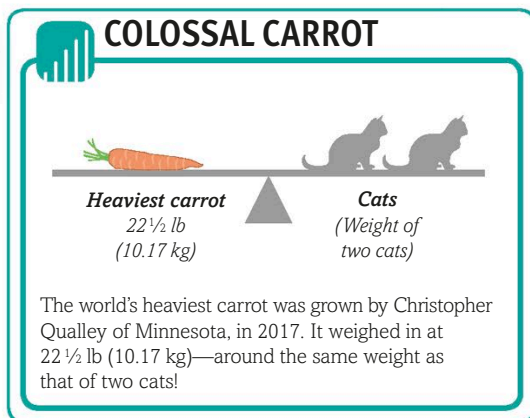


Turnip

The white root turns purple when exposed to sunlight.



This root becomes sweeter after winter frosts.



Air channels form a distinctive pattern.

Lotus root

Vegetables that grow underground can be stored for long periods of time, making them important food crops, especially when other foods are scarce. The swollen roots store energy, which the plants use to regrow in the spring—if they are not eaten first!

Many underground vegetables, including **parsnips**, **beets**, **carrots**, **rutabagas**, and **daikons**, are made of swollen roots, but others store energy in different ways. **Arrowhead** and **taro** plants store energy in bulblike stems called corms, while **lotus roots** are modified stems that grow



This large root can grow up to 12 in (30 cm) long and is eaten as a winter food by people and cattle.

Taro

Rutabaga

Radish

This underground stem is an important food in tropical regions of Africa and Asia.

Colorful varieties are grown for their high vitamin content.

Potato

These peppery roots are eaten raw in salads

Carrot

This tropical root is used to produce flour and can also be eaten as a vegetable.

Cassava

The knobby tubers become sweeter when left in the sun.

Daikon

Long white roots grow up to 23 1/2 in (60 cm) long and are a popular food in Asia.

Oca

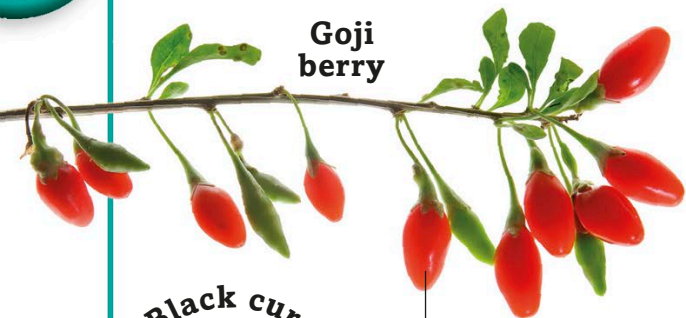
These crunchy roots taste sweet and come in a variety of colors.

horizontally, called rhizomes. **Potatoes** and **ocas** are tubers made from swollen stems and have spots called eyes from which new shoots can grow. Many root vegetables are vital food sources. **Cassava**, for example, can be grown in poor, dry soils and is a staple food in many parts of Africa. The **dandelion** is perhaps best known for its yellow flowers, but its roots can be used to make tea, which is believed to have medicinal properties.



Soft fruits

Goji berry



Black currant



These oval berries have a sweet-sour taste and are eaten dried.

Ripening fruits change color from white to red to purple.



Red currant

The fruits are delicious fresh or in a jam.



Raspberry

The dark purple berries are used to make jams and syrups.

Cloudberry



These amber-colored fruits are rich in vitamin C.

Cranberry sauce is traditionally eaten with turkey at Thanksgiving in the US.

Cranberry



This hardy plant can survive extreme cold.

Lingonberry



Mulberry

Up to 25 red berries are produced on each stem.



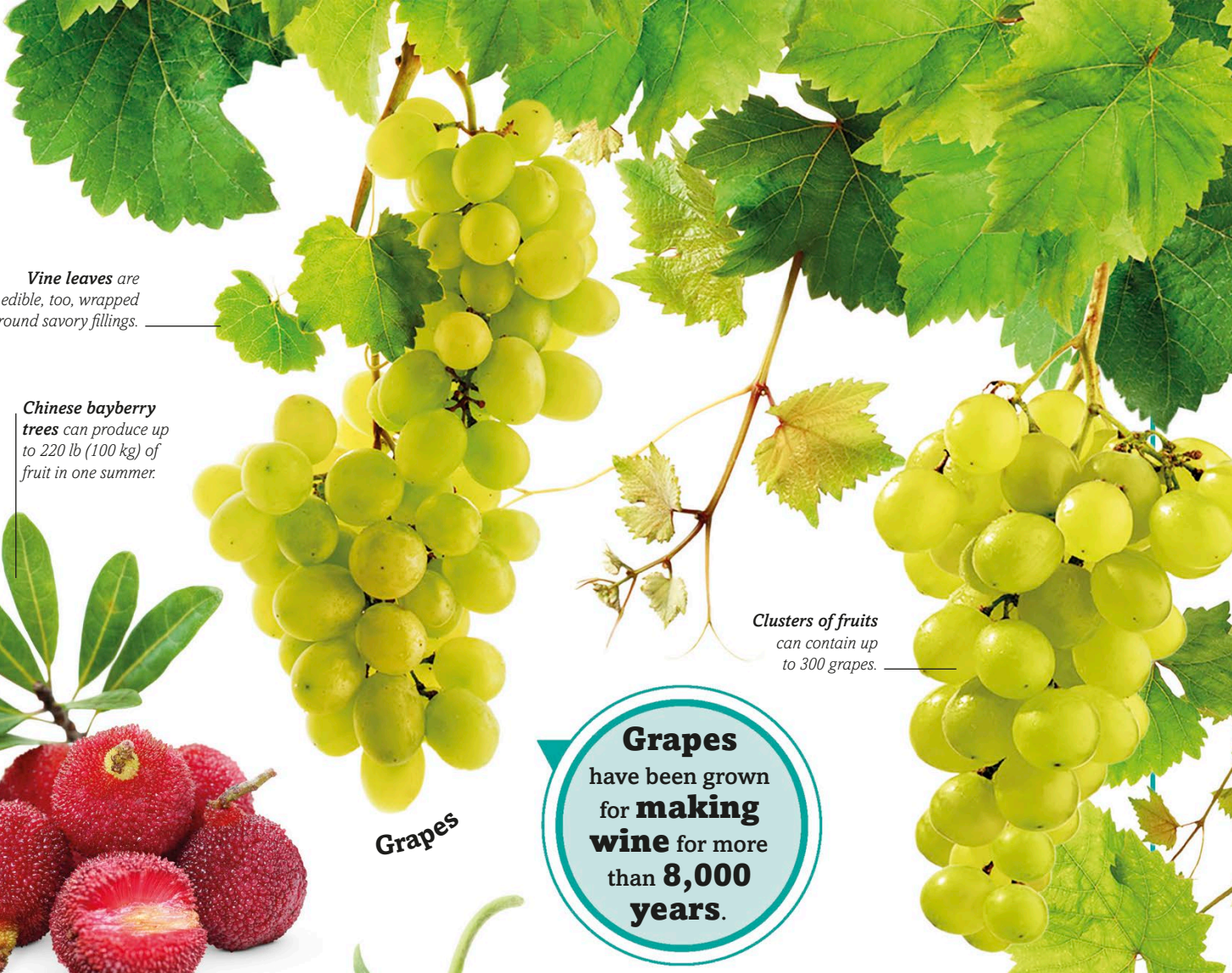
This is a cluster of "drupelets"—mini fruits each with a seed inside.




Blackberry

The juicy, thin-skinned fruits we call berries, with pulpy flesh and seeds rather than a stone, are also known as soft fruits. Most are sweet, some are sour, but all are rich in vitamins. Wild berries have been an important source of food for thousands of years.

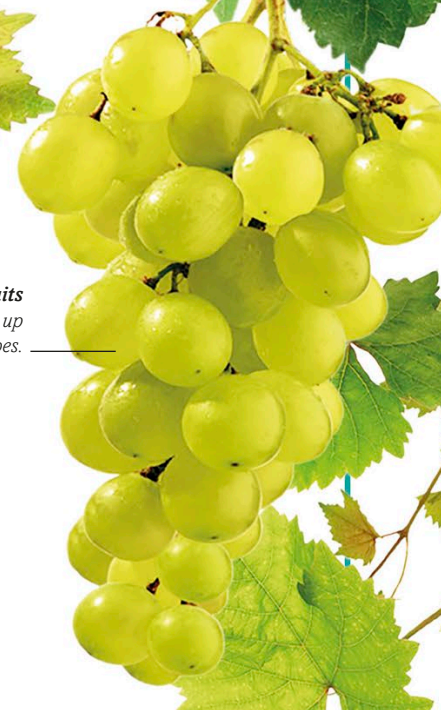
Most soft fruits grow on bushes and shrubs, but **mulberries**, **Chinese bayberries**, and **goji berries** grow on trees. **Cranberry** bushes are unusual because they grow in bogs. These are flooded before harvest, and special machines called eggbeaters are sent in to knock the cranberries from the



Vine leaves are edible, too, wrapped round savory fillings.



Chinese bayberry trees can produce up to 220 lb (100 kg) of fruit in one summer.



Clusters of fruits can contain up to 300 grapes.




Grapes have been grown for **making wine** for more than **8,000 years**.

Chinese bayberry



Dark blueberries grow up to 1/2 in (1.6 cm) across.

Blueberry



Yellow seeds are actually tiny fruits on a swollen stem.

Strawberry

plants so they float away and can be skimmed from the surface of the water. In Scandinavia, **cloudberrries** and **lingonberries** are mostly picked from wild bushes. **Grapes** hang in bunches from long vines and come in several different colors, from green

to black. They are eaten fresh, made into wine, and dried into raisins and currants. **Strawberries** ripen on small, low-growing plants. The big, fat, juicy fruits we eat today have been cultivated from tiny, but delicious, wild strawberries the size of peas.



VOLCANIC VINEYARD Centuries ago, erupting volcanoes covered the Spanish island of Lanzarote in ash, ending traditional farming but creating a unique environment for grapevines. Although it may not look it, the volcanic ash in the wine-making region of La Geria is very fertile. This nutrition-rich soil combined with warm days and cold nights make this an ideal region for growing grapes.



There is not much rain on Lanzarote, but in La Geria's vineyards, an ingenious method of cultivating vines ensures that every available drop of moisture reaches the growing plants. Each young vine is placed in a shallow individual pit. Any rainfall or overnight dew is channeled down the sloping walls of the pit to reach the roots of the vine nestling at the

bottom. The low, surrounding semicircular stone walls protect the vines from the wind and help prevent the ground from drying out. This technique has been used successfully for many years. Around 10,000 vines grow in the La Geria valley, producing red and white wines. The area is recognized as a Protected Landscape.

Stone fruits



Cherry

These red fruits usually grow in pairs on a single, short stem.



Plum

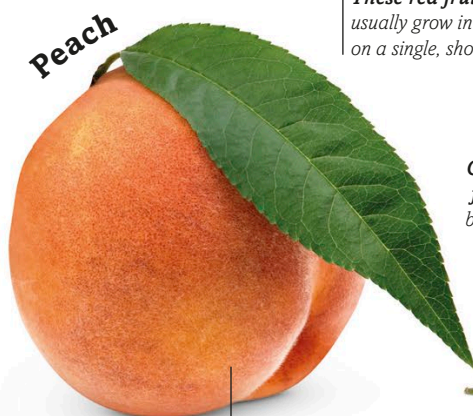
Dried and shriveled plums are known as prunes.



Olive

Hard and bitter, olives are processed before eating, or pressed for their oil.

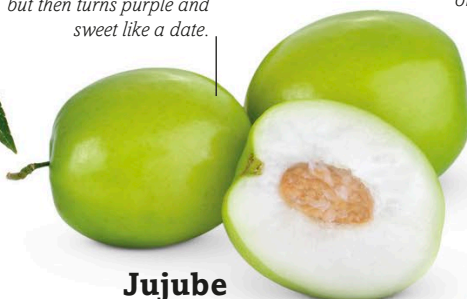
The large, round seed makes up 80 percent of the berry's interior.



Peach

Fuzzy skin protects the easily bruised flesh of this fruit.

Green and unripe, this fruit tastes like an apple but then turns purple and sweet like a date.



Jujube



Acai berry

This flat, oval seed can grow up to 2¾ in (7 cm) long and is tricky to cut out.



Mango



The green, unripe fruit can be eaten before the almond inside hardens.

Almond

These thin-skinned, firm, often fleshy fruits, with a single, hard seed at the center, are known as drupes or, more commonly, stone fruits. Many have been cultivated from wild trees to produce bigger, juicier fruits.

The sweet fruits of the hardy **date palm** have been a vital source of food for desert peoples for thousands of years. Delicious fresh, they can also be dried and stored for longer periods of time. The sweet, juicy flesh of **peaches** is delicious and is eaten fresh, though some people don't like



Sloe

These small, slightly sour fruits are used to make preserves and flavor spirits.



Nectarine

The hard, wrinkled stone protects an almond-shaped seed.

This fragrant fruit is eaten both fresh and dried.



Apricot



Dates

Date palms can produce up to **310 lb (140 kg)** of fruit each year.

These high-growing fruits are picked with the help of ropes, ladders, or cherry-picker trucks.

The pulp of this bitter fruit is used to make jams.



Damson

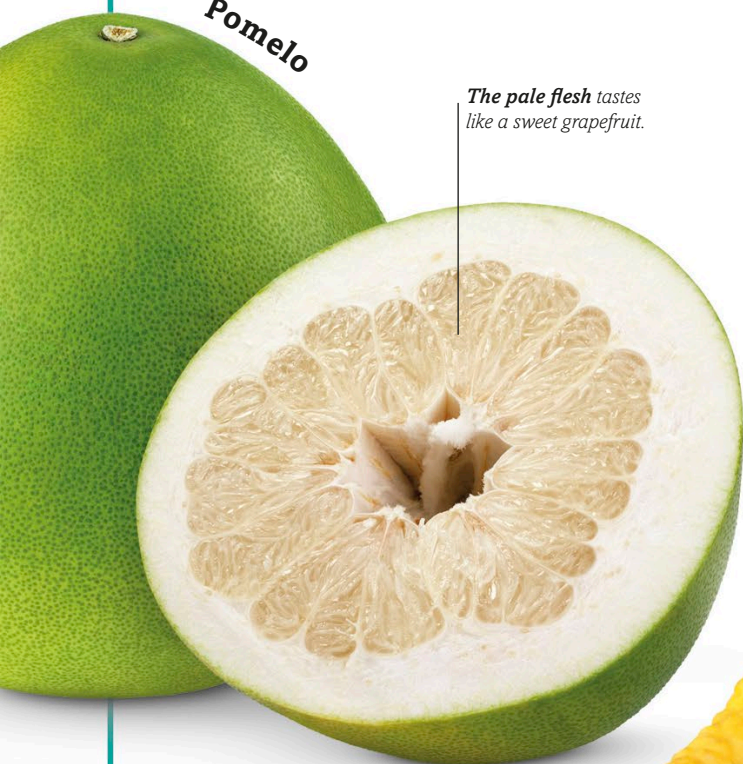
its fuzzy skin and prefer its smooth relative, the **nectarine**. Some stone fruits are not sweet but sour—the **sloe** must be cooked up with lots of sugar. The flesh of **olives** is hard as well as bitter. But when crushed in a press, a greenish-gold oil can be extracted. Some stone fruits, such

as **almonds**, are grown for their edible seeds rather than their flesh. Some people do eat whole unripe green almonds, which are fuzzy, crunchy, and tart, with a soft, jelly-filled seed.



Juicy fruits

Pomelo



The pale flesh tastes like a sweet grapefruit.

Buddha's hand



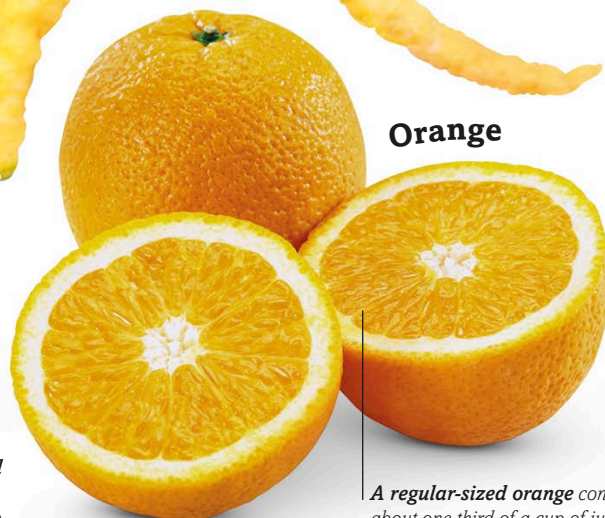
This finger-shaped fruit smells like a mix of lemon and lavender.

Blood orange



The bright red flesh gives this orange its name.

Orange



A regular-sized orange contains about one-third of a cup of juice.

Citrus fruits are a type of berry with a pulpy, juicy flesh, covered by a thick peel. They are widely eaten because of their tangy flavors and are rich in vitamins. Originally from Asia, citrus fruits are now grown in tropical countries around the world.

Scientists believe that the dozens of citrus fruits available today can be traced back to just three ancestral plants, the **pomelo**, the mandarin orange, and the **citron**. Today, **oranges** make up more than 50 percent of all citrus fruits produced worldwide. Their sharp, tangy



Lemon
juice, which cures **scurvy**, became **compulsory** on British ships in **1795**.

The yellow outer layer, which is full of flavor, is called the zest.

Key lime

The bright green peel turns yellow as the fruit ripens.

Citron

The thick peel is used to make jams.

Kumquat

These bite-sized fruits do not require peeling.

Kaffir lime

The thick, white inner layer is called the pith.

These knobby fruits are used to make citrus-scented perfumes.

Jamaican tangelo

A tangelo's skin is loose and easy to peel.

The large fruits can grow up to 5 in (15 cm) across.

Grapefruit

flavor comes from the high content of citric acid, which is highest in **lemons** and **limes**. Unlike most citrus fruits, the **Buddha's hand** has little edible flesh and is instead used in perfumes and as an offering in Buddhist temples. The peel of most citrus fruits is tough and bitter, while the

segments inside are juicy. The exception to this rule is the **kumquat**, which has a sweet peel and a bitter center. The **Jamaican tangelo** is a natural mix of an orange and a pomelo, with very juicy, sweet-tasting flesh and a wrinkled, fragrant peel.

Tropical fruits



The spiky skin protects tangy yellow flesh.

Pineapple

The world's largest tree-borne fruit, it can grow up to 36 in (90 cm) long.



Each fruit contains around 250 edible seeds.

Passion fruit

This star-shaped fruit comes in sweet and sour varieties.



Star fruit



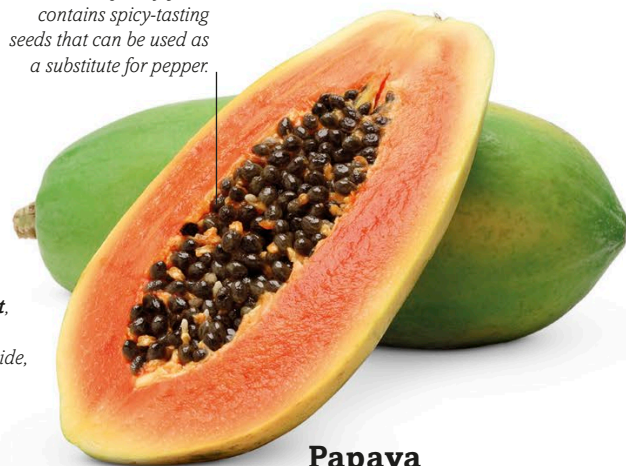
The long, soft spines turn red or yellow when the fruit is ripe.



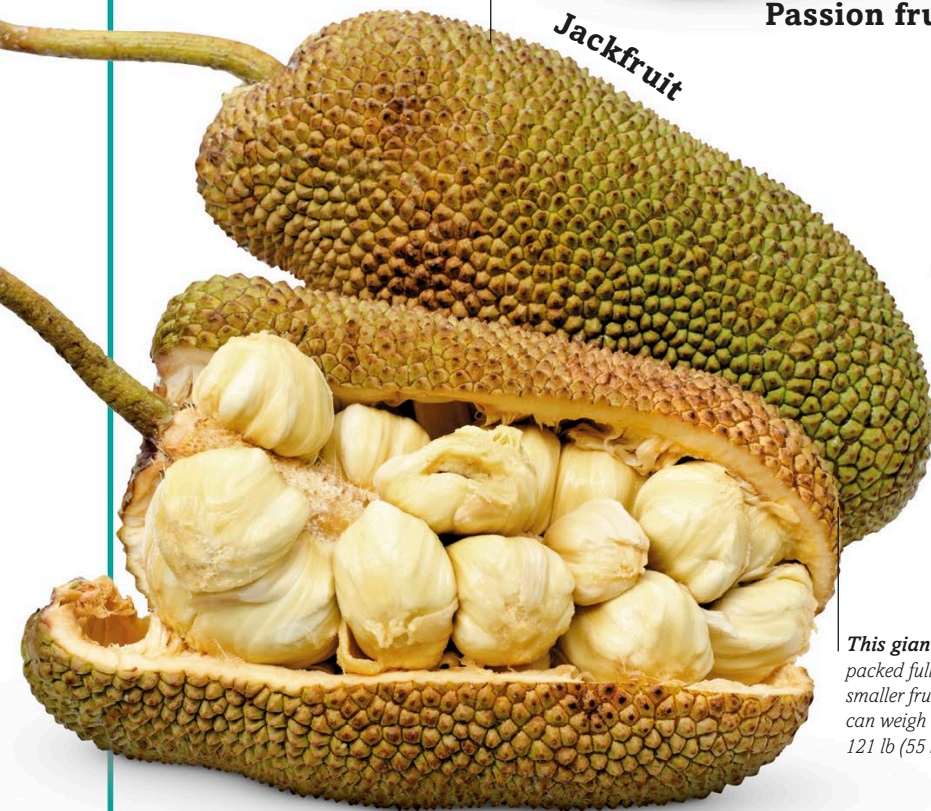
This sweet fruit is usually eaten like an apple.

Persimmon

Sweet, fleshy fruit contains spicy-tasting seeds that can be used as a substitute for pepper.



Papaya



Jackfruit

This giant fruit, packed full of smaller fruits inside, can weigh up to 121 lb (55 kg).

Tropical fruits come in a wide range of shapes, sizes, and flavors. These colorful fruits grow in warm, wet regions but are now shipped all over the world where they have become very popular.

While all the tropical fruits shown here are commonly eaten raw and whole, many are also used in a range of other ways. **Pineapples** and **passion fruits** are often juiced, while **rambutans** and **guavas** are made into jams. The white fruits inside **jackfruits** can be used

Each
rambutan
tree produces
**more than
6,000 fruits**
in a year.

Rambutan

*Speckled flesh
tastes faintly
of kiwi fruit.*



Inside the fruit

Dragon fruit

*Hairy, brittle skin
encloses edible white
flesh inside.*

*The juicy flesh has
a grainy texture and
tastes like caramel.*

Chikoo



*Vivid pink flesh
tastes like a mix of
pear and strawberry.*



Guava

*Cream-colored flesh
tastes like sweet custard
with a hint of onion.*

Durian



*White segments
are sweet and tangy.*

Inedible skin

*This perfumed
fruit encases a large,
oval-shaped seed.*

Lychee



Mangosteen



in baking, and their stringy texture has made them popular as an alternative to meat in vegetarian and vegan cooking. Asian dishes are sometimes sweetened using **star fruits** and **papayas**. **Persimmons** are used to add flavor to smoothies and cold desserts, while

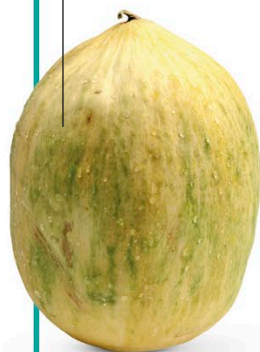
lychees are poached in syrup to be eaten with ice cream. The smelly **durian** has a unique flavor that some love and others hate. Known as the king of fruits, durians are used to make a huge variety of sweet treats, including candies, cakes, and ice cream.



Magnificent melons



Large, flat-bottomed, with a sweet, slightly spicy flavor, some consider this the king of melons!



Crenshaw melon

Nicknamed "little mouse watermelon," this grape-sized Mexican fruit tastes like a cucumber.



Cucamelon

The striped fruits are small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.



Tigger melon

The flesh of a watermelon is a thirst-quenching 92 percent water!



Watermelon



Gac

When ripe, this melon has spiny red skin, yellow flesh, and slimy red seeds.

This rare Indian melon has fragrant flesh and stripes like a beach ball.



Kajari melon

Melons are the sweeter relatives of gourds, cucumbers, and pumpkins, and they come in all shapes, sizes, tastes, and colors. There are thousands of varieties, but they all grow best where the climate is warm and there is plenty of water.

These juicy fruits originally came from Africa and the Middle East but are enjoyed all over the world today. They grow on vines and have a tough skin, and there are two main types—sweet melons and watermelons. Sweet melons include **honeydew**, **charentais**,



Warty, unripe fruits are used in many Asian dishes.

Bitter melon



HYDROPONIC MELONS

Hydroponics is a method of growing plants indoors in a liquid full of nutrients. It can produce more food than crops grown in soil because of the controlled environment, in which temperature, light, and humidity can be regulated. This is a good method for growing melons, which need a lot of water.



The orange flesh is a good source of vitamins.

Charentais melon

Considered a rare treat, just two of these fruits sold for \$28,000 (£21,500) in Japan in 2016.

Yubari King melon



Jellylike flesh tastes like a cross between a banana and a cucumber.



Sweet, pale green flesh is enclosed within a thick, waxy rind.

Honeydew melon



This thin-skinned fruit can be eaten whole—rind and all.

Korean melon



Santa Claus melon

This melon takes its name from the fact that it keeps well, almost until Christmas!



Horned melon

Kajari, Korean, tigger, Santa Claus, Yubari King, and most of the other melons shown above. Even the odd-looking **horned melon**, an important source of food and water in the Kalahari Desert of Namibia, and the prickly **gac** from southeast Asia,

are related. The most commonly grown melon is the **watermelon**. It's also the heaviest. An average specimen is about 22 lb (10 kg), but the record-breaking biggest weighed in at 350 lb (159 kg)—that's equal to the weight of an adult male panda!





A bit nutty



Almond

These edible seeds are packed with fiber, protein, and healthy fats.



Hazelnuts



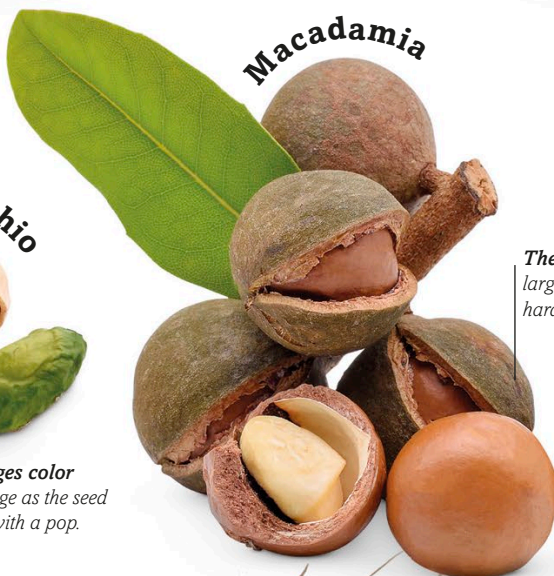
Turkish hazelnut

Frilly husk covers all but the tip of the nut.



Pistachio

The shell changes color from green to beige as the seed ripens, opening with a pop.



Macadamia

The shells of these large nuts are the hardest among all nuts.



English walnut

The two halves of the wrinkly fruit are separated by a partition.



Coconut

Hollow seeds are creamy white with a clear liquid inside.



TRUE VS. FALSE NUT

A true nut is a hardened fruit containing one seed. False nuts develop inside fruits, and are more like the core of an apple.

This shell is a fruit's fleshy body that happens to be hard.



Acorn (true nut)

This is a seed and not the entire fruit.



Brazil nuts (false nut)

True nuts, such as chestnuts, acorns, and hazelnuts, are hard fruits containing a seed. Many of the nuts we eat are actually the seeds of fruits, or false nuts. To avoid confusion between the two, all edible nuts are called culinary nuts.

Nuts have been eaten by humans for thousands of years. Their high fat and protein contents make them a nutritious food. They do not rot or perish quickly, so early humans could store them for the winter months. Many culinary nuts are the seeds of fleshy stone fruits similar to plums,



Cashew stalks swell as the fruit ripens.

Cashew



Cashew nuts

Hollow where nuts were cracked and ground with a stone by ancient people about 10,000 years ago.



Prehistoric nutting stone

A toxic resin in the cashew shell can irritate the skin.



Peanut

The edible seed is covered by a thin, reddish brown seed coat.

Brazil nut



Extra-hard shell can be cracked open by birds with very tough beaks.



Sweet chestnut

A spiny sheath protects up to three developing nuts.



These wrinkled nuts have a buttery flavor.

Pecan

Stubby pine nuts can be up to 3 in (8 cm) long.



Pine nut

including **almonds**, **pistachios**, **coconuts**, **English walnuts**, **pecans**, and **cashews**, while **pine nuts** are seeds found inside pine cones. **Peanuts** are the strangest so-called nut. Once pollinated, peanut flowers push a stalk into the soil to produce an underground bean pod

containing up to four nutlike seeds. Since they grow beneath the soil, they are also known as groundnuts. Of the nuts shown here, **hazelnuts** and **sweet chestnuts** are the only “true” nuts. Their hard shells are the flesh of the fruit, while the part we eat is the seed.



Eat your greens!

Savoy cabbage



These fibrous, wrinkly leaves keep their shape when cooked.

Lettuce



Raw leaves are often added to salads.

Radicchio



Brussels sprouts



Small, round leaf buds resemble baby cabbages.

Peppery leaf adds a spicy flavor to salads.

Arugula



Leafy greens contain **vitamin K**, which helps **wounds heal**.

Rainbow chard



These colorful plants are packed with vitamin K and other essential nutrients.

Almost 2,500 plants are known to have leaves you can eat, but some taste better than others. While many leafy vegetables are eaten raw in salads, others are cooked into a wide variety of dishes around the world. Packed with nutrients, these edible leaves come in many colors and shapes and form an essential part of a healthy diet.



Kale

The bitter leaves become sweeter after a frost.



Bok choy

Spinach



These delicate leaves lose water and shrivel up when cooked.

Endive



Inner leaves are pale because they receive less sunlight.

Red cabbage



The leaves of the red cabbage are sweeter and tougher than those of the white cabbage.

Tightly packed ball of leaves



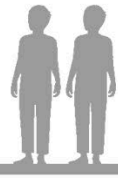
These peppery leaves grow both on land and in streams.

Watercress

GIANT CABBAGE



Heaviest cabbage
(138 1/3 lb / 62.7 kg)



Children
(Weight of two children)

The heaviest cabbage ever grown was a whopping 138 1/3 lb (62.7 kg), the average weight of two young children. It was grown in Alaska in 2012.

For thousands of years, people have cultivated leafy vegetables to produce new varieties that give better harvests and more interesting flavors. The results of these gradual changes can be clearly seen in the differences between vegetables like **Brussels sprouts**, **savoy cabbage**, **kale**, **red cabbage**, and broccoli, all of which are the same species of plant.

Each was bred by humans for bigger leaves, more leaf buds, thicker leaf stalks, or different colors. The vibrant **rainbow chard** and **radicchio** plants seen today are also a result of careful selection by breeders over time. The crisp **lettuce**, too, was once a weed with prickly leaves and stems and was grown by the ancient Egyptians for its oily seeds.

Peas and beans

Flowering plants

Winged beans

Four frilly wings run along the length of each edible pod.

Fava beans

These flattened beans grow to 1 in (2.5 cm) in length.

Runner beans

Pink beans or young seed pods are both popular side dishes.

Each small pod contains two circular seeds.

Lentils

Lentils are rich in vitamins and minerals.

Up to 14 beans are produced per pod.

Adzuki beans

Lima beans

These pale beans have a buttery texture and flavor.

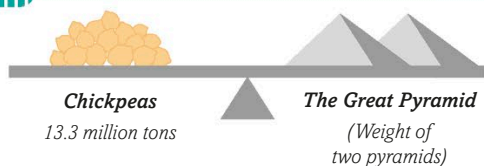
Black-eyed peas

Its distinct black spots give this seed its name.

Chickpeas

Short pods contain two or three edible seeds.

CHICKPEAS GALORE



The world produced 13.3 million tons of chickpeas in 2016, most of which was grown in India. This harvest weighed twice as much as the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt, known to weigh 6.5 million tons.

Peas, beans, and lentils are types of seeds known as pulses. They are rich in proteins, fiber, and nutrients and have been eaten by humans around the world for thousands of years. Today, India is the biggest grower and consumer of pulses, particularly lentils.

Humans started farming pulses because their seeds can be easily dried and stored for when food is scarce. **Lentils** are one of our oldest crops, with archaeological evidence showing that humans ate them more than 13,000 years ago in Greece, while 7,500-year-old **chickpeas** have been found in excavations in Turkey.



Peas

These small dried beans come in many different colors.



Tepary beans

Around six to seven round peas are usually produced in each pod.



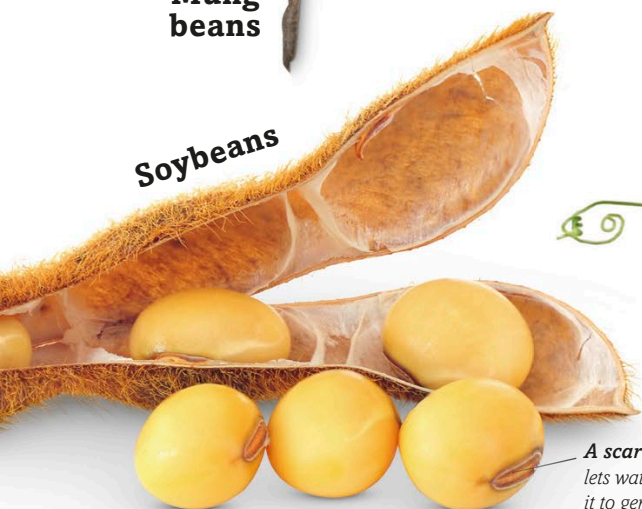
Borlotti beans

The red speckles disappear when this bean is cooked.



Mung beans

These tiny beans are often cooked with sugar in Asian baked goods.



Soybeans

A scar on the seed lets water in, allowing it to germinate.



Snow peas

The white flowers of the snow pea usually self-pollinate.

"Pulse"
comes from the Latin *puls*, meaning "thick gruel, porridge, or mush."

Unripe pods are eaten raw or in a stir-fry.

Today, we eat the fresh green seed pods of **winged beans**, **runner beans**, and **snow peas**, as well as the seeds themselves. **Fava beans**, **lima beans**, and **borlotti beans** also have tasty protein-filled seeds. **Soybeans** can be used to feed farm animals, make oil, and produce foods such as tofu.

Drought-resistant **teparty bean** plants can survive very dry conditions and thrive in hot countries like their native Mexico. It is important to cook all beans before eating because they contain proteins that can be harmful if not destroyed by heat.

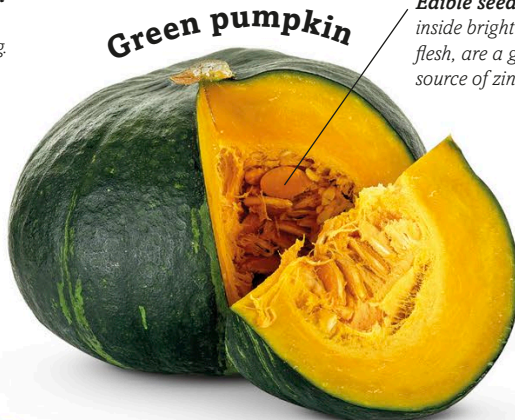


All squashed up!



Cushaw pumpkin

This stripy squash can grow up to 19½ in (50 cm) long.



Green pumpkin

Edible seeds, held inside bright yellow flesh, are a good source of zinc.



A hooked neck gives this warty yellow squash its name.

Crookneck squashes



The round fruits change color from green to orange as they ripen.

Pumpkin



PLUMP PUMPKIN



Heaviest pumpkin
2,624 lb
(1,190.5 kg)

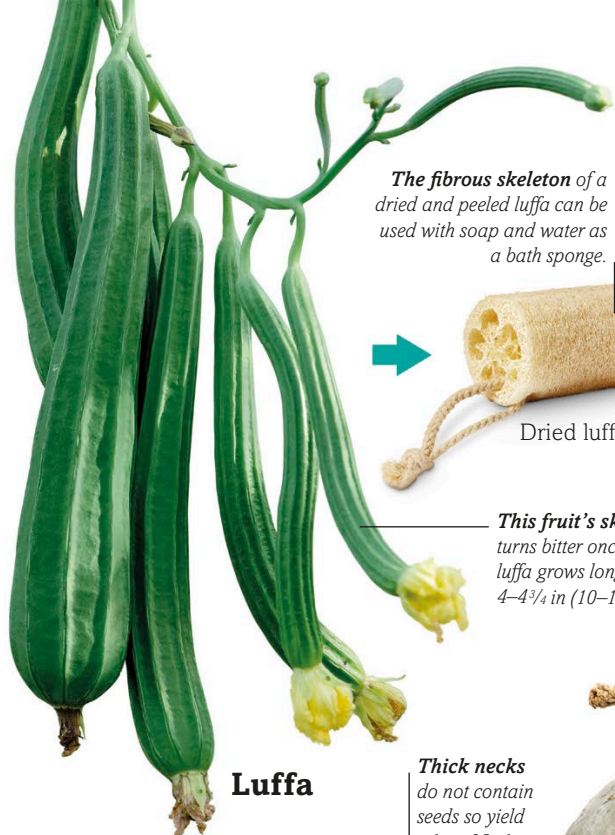


Hatchback car

The world record for the heaviest pumpkin ever grown was in 2016 for a fruit weighing 2,624 lb (1,190.5 kg), around the same weight as a hatchback car.

Although they are typically eaten as vegetables, squashes are actually the fruits of creeping vine plants that belong to the gourd family. There are many types of squashes, and they come in lots of curious shapes.

Almost all species of squash originally come from Central and South America but are now grown around the world, particularly in India and China. These large and fleshy fruits are rich in vitamins. The vitamin content is particularly high in squashes with orange and yellow flesh, such



The fibrous skeleton of a dried and peeled luffa can be used with soap and water as a bath sponge.



Dried luffa

This fruit's skin turns bitter once the luffa grows longer than 4-4 3/4 in (10-12 cm).

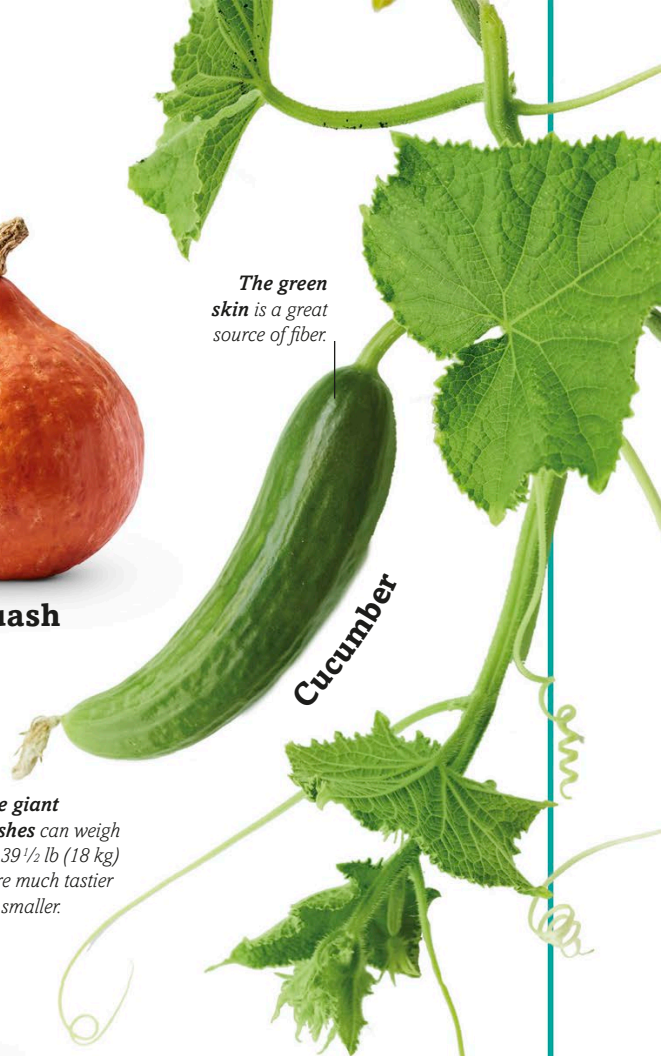
Luffa

The teardrop-shaped fruits taste like chestnuts and are popular in Japan.



Hubbard squash

The green skin is a great source of fiber.



Cucumber

Thick necks do not contain seeds so yield a lot of flesh.



Butternut squash



Blue Hubbard squash

These giant squashes can weigh up to 39 1/2 lb (18 kg) but are much tastier when smaller.



Pattypan squashes

Long necks can stretch to more than 35 in (90 cm).



Tromboncino

Shaped like a flying saucer, these fruits are a slightly sweeter version of a zucchini.

Hulusi flutes are traditional Chinese instruments made of a gourd and three bamboo pipes.



Gourd

as **green pumpkins** and **Hubbard squashes**. Most of these fruits are cooked and eaten as savory dishes such as soups and stews, but some sweeter varieties, including **pumpkin** and **butternut squash**, are also baked into cakes and pies. **Cucumbers** are typically eaten

raw or pickled. Edible **pattypan squashes** are popular fall decorations, while other squashes with hard skins, known as **gourds**, can be dried and used to make everyday items such as jars, bottles, or even musical instruments, including maracas, flutes, and drums.



PUMPKIN BOAT RACE Paddling giant pumpkins for canoes, contestants race around a lake at the Tualatin Pumpkin Regatta in Oregon. Held every fall, such events are hugely popular not just in the US but also countries including Canada and Germany. Pumpkins are easily converted into boats, since they are already partly hollow inside, making it a simple task to carve out space for a rower to sit inside.



Developing from star-shaped, yellow flowers, the bigger varieties of pumpkins can swell rapidly to enormous sizes—some measure more than 13 ft (4 m) around the middle and weigh 992 lb (450 kg). In the Tualatin race, competitors wearing costumes and life jackets paddle their pumpkins 295 ft (90 m) and back. Pumpkins are also the main attraction

in a variety of other holidays and festivals. American families gather every year for Thanksgiving, which is famous for its pumpkin pie. At Halloween, on October 31 each year, children in many countries carve out pumpkins to look like scary or funny faces, then put a candle inside to give them an eerie glow, to frighten off evil spirits.



Bulbs, stems, and stalks



Harvesting palm trunks

Bark is stripped from the trunk to reveal the crunchy vegetable inside.

**Heart of palm****Rhubarb**

Fleshy leaf stalks are often stewed with sugar and eaten in desserts.



OVERSIZED ONION

In 2014, the largest ever onion was grown in the UK. The ginormous bulb weighed 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ lb (8.5 kg), approximately the same weight as a pug dog.



Largest onion

Pug

Many plants make food in the warmer months and then store it in their bulbs, stems, and stalks. This makes these vegetables a valuable food source for the winter months, and humans have eaten them for thousands of years.

Cardoon

Leaf stalks are eaten after removing the spiny leaf blades.

The thick stem tastes like celery and can reach up to 6 in (15 cm) across.

**Leek**

The cylindrical bulbs turn white underground.

Onion

When cut, these fleshy bulbs release a chemical that makes your eyes sting and water.

**Celeriac****Asparagus**

Spears of asparagus emerge from the earth in spring.



Bulbs, such as **leeks**, **onions**, and **garlic**, are made up of fleshy leaves, while **celeriac**, **asparagus**, and **kohlrabi** are swollen stems that are tastiest eaten when young and tender. Other vegetables,



Kohlrabi

Swollen stems taste like a sweeter version of broccoli.



Water chestnut

The crunchy underground stem is often eaten in Chinese dishes.



Bamboo shoot

These conical, tender shoots of the bamboo plant are widely used in Asian cooking.



Samphire

The salty stems of this coastal plant are often eaten with fish.



Garlic

Up to 20 cloves of garlic make up each bulb.

The feathery leaves, swollen stem, and seeds all taste like licorice.



Fennel

Water chestnuts are **grown underwater** in flooded fields called **paddies**.

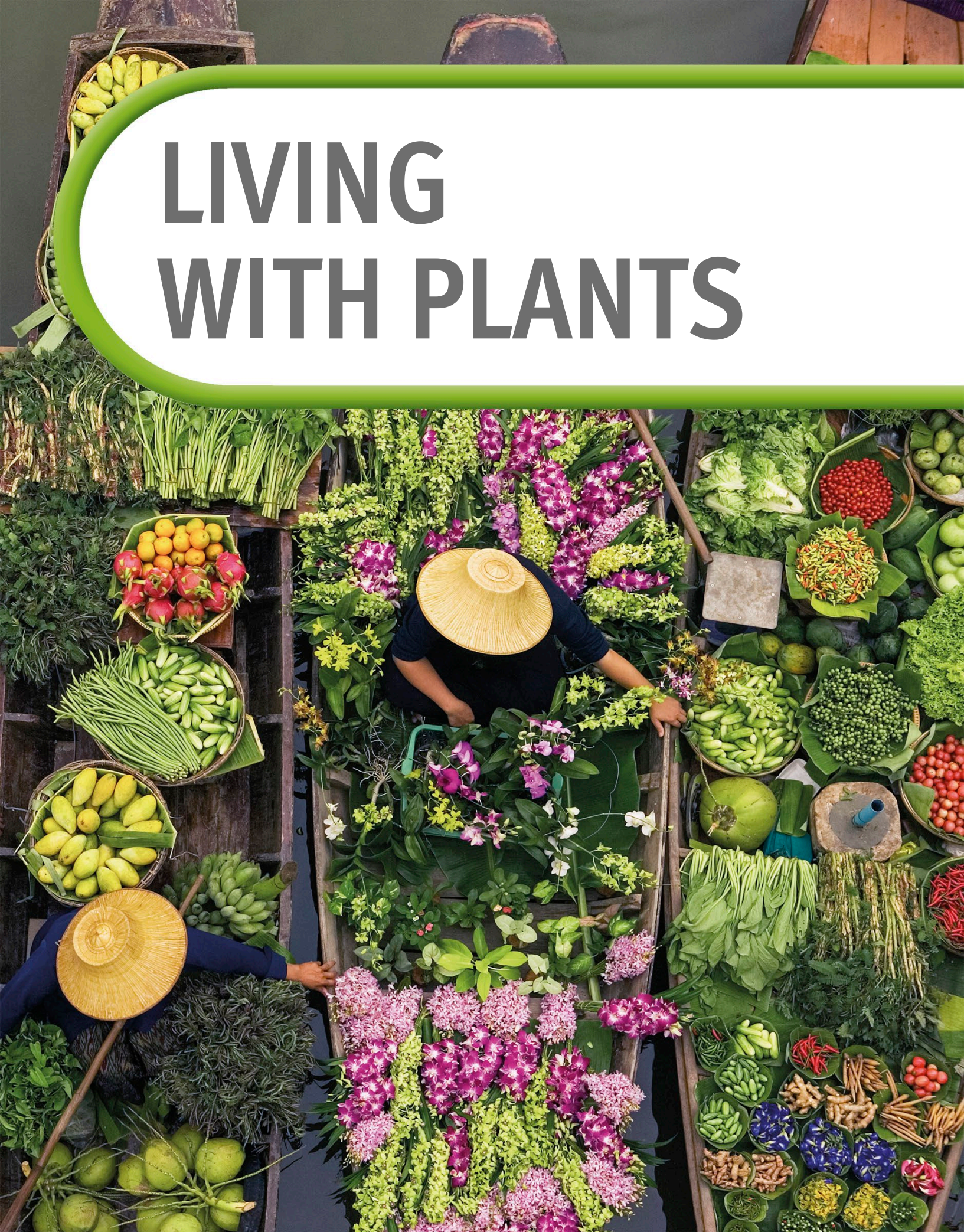
including **rhubarb** and **cardoons**, are the leaf stalks of the plant, although the leaves themselves are not edible. The enlarged base of **fennel** is made of both swollen stems and leaf stalks. The growing tips of many different types of **bamboo** are eaten as bamboo shoots, but harvesting them does not harm the mature

plant. However, young bamboo shoots contain natural toxins, which must be removed by boiling in water. **Hearts of palm** are harvested from the trunks of several types of palm trees. **Samphire** is an asparagus-like plant that grows in coastal areas. Its stems can be eaten raw or boiled.





LIVING WITH PLANTS





Plants and people

The earliest people were hunter-gatherers, always on the move searching for food such as meat, berries, and seeds. Then around 12,000 years ago, the first farming began in the Fertile Crescent, a region in the Middle East. Here, people settled down and learned to sow, harvest, and store crops—the ancestors of wild grasses—and domesticate animals.

How plants have changed

Humans have cultivated many plants since farming began. Teosinte, an ancient wild relative of corn, bore just a few hard kernels. Farmers noticed that some teosinte plants produced more kernels and with a softer texture so planted these the next season. Over time, this selective farming method led to the large cobs we eat today.

A hard coat makes the few kernels tough to eat.



Teosinte



Corn

Sowing seeds > For thousands of years, people have sowed seeds by hand. Here, as the man drives the plow, the woman follows behind sowing the seeds.



Modern farming methods

Not only have the plants we farm changed, but modern agricultural machines help us sow, grow, and harvest crops more easily and quickly than ever before. Over the centuries, the population of the world has exploded and continues to grow. Without modern farming methods, billions of people would go hungry.

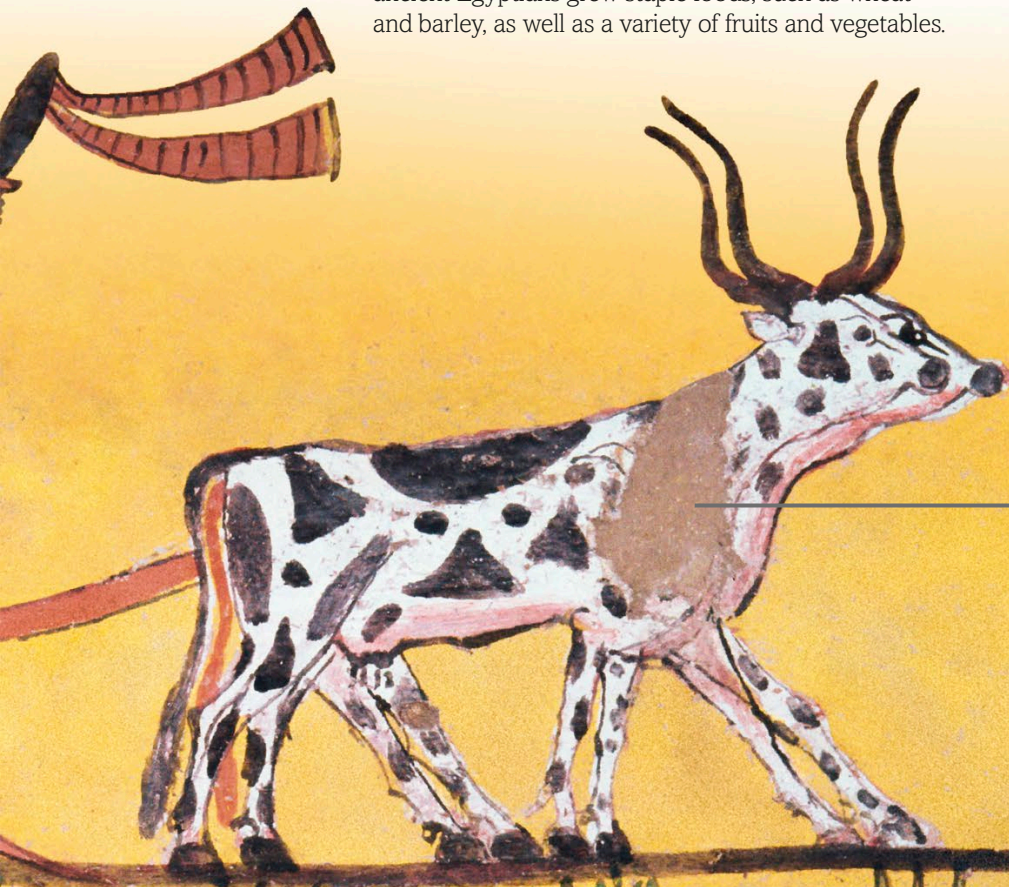
To harvest a field using a machine, the entire crop must mature at the same speed and reach a similar height.



Combine harvester

Farming in ancient Egypt

In ancient Egypt, farming began along the banks of the Nile River. Every summer the river flooded the land, leaving fields watered and rich in nutrients. Here the ancient Egyptians grew staple foods, such as wheat and barley, as well as a variety of fruits and vegetables.



Other ways people use plants

Medicine

From headaches to cancer, more than 50,000 plants around the world are used to treat diseases.



Cosmetics

Many plant-based chemicals that are fragrant or moisturizing are used in cosmetics such as shampoos and perfumes.



Furniture

Trees provide all the lumber used to make furniture. Forests must be carefully managed to replace the trees that are used.



Paper

Most paper comes from trees. Wood chips are mixed with water to make a pulp, which is flattened and dried into thin sheets.



Building materials

Lumber is also a popular building material for houses because it is strong, insulating, and environmentally friendly.



Clothes

The seed fibers of cotton and stem fibers of flax, hemp, and bamboo are often used to make fabrics.



Musical instruments

The woods of some trees can produce deep, rich sounds and have been used for centuries to make musical instruments.



Cattle-drawn plow > The first plows were pulled by people. The ancient Egyptians were the first to domesticate cattle and use them to pull heavier plows to cut tracks in the soil for sowing the seed.



The spices of life



Without spices—the dried seeds, fruits, roots, and bark of plants—our food would be much less tasty. For thousands of years, people have been adding spices to their cooking to flavor, color, and preserve their food. Some spices, such as turmeric and ginger, are used as health remedies, too.



Dried seeds

Cubelike seeds are often used in Indian cooking.



Fenugreek

These tiny black seeds are ground to make a hot sauce.



Dried seeds

Each droopy seed pod can grow up to 6 in (15 cm) in length.



Vanilla



Mustard



Dried seed pods

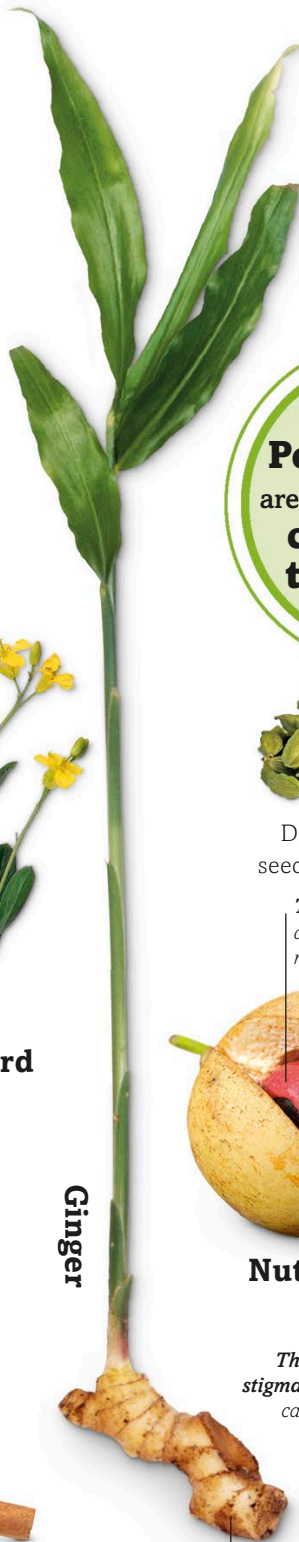


Harvesting cinnamon

The inner bark of the cinnamon tree is harvested and cut into small sticks.



Cinnamon sticks



Ginger

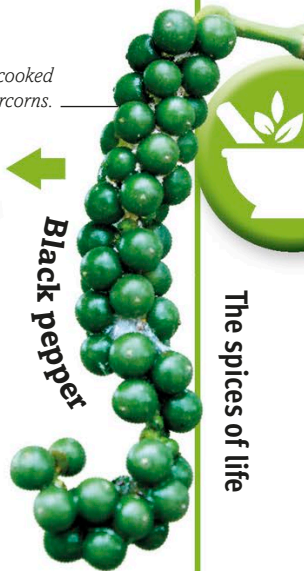
Underground stems have a hot, spicy flavor.



Dried fruits

Black pepper

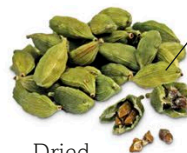
Unripe fruits are cooked and dried into peppercorns.



The spices of life

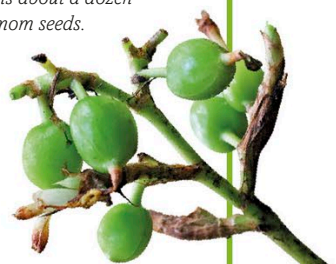
Peppercorns are the world's most commonly traded spice.

Each seed pod contains about a dozen cardamom seeds.

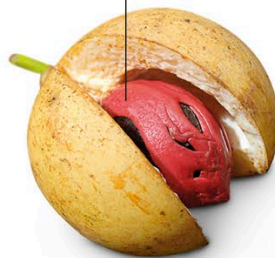


Dried seed pods

The red, outer covering around this seed is used to make another spice called mace.



Green cardamom



Nutmeg



Dried seeds

The fragrant red stigmas are harvested carefully by hand.



Saffron

Many spices come from tropical plants from East Asia. Our appetite for their flavors makes them highly valuable, and it was the demand for spices that drove European explorers and traders to sail the globe in search of precious supplies in the 15th and 16th centuries. The Italian explorer Christopher Columbus reached the Caribbean Islands while trying to find a new spice trade

route to India. Instead, he found **chile** peppers, which he brought back to Europe. Today we take for granted the exotic ingredients in our kitchen pantries. We can't imagine not having **pepper** on the table, a hot dog without **mustard**, or ice cream without **vanilla**. The most expensive spice in the world is **saffron**, which is worth more than gold by weight.



Helpful herbs

Flat-leaf parsley



Curly parsley



Leaves have a strong taste and in ancient Greece and Rome were fed to chariot horses to give them strength.

Chewing these leaves can help freshen breath after eating garlic.

Thyme



These fragrant leaves were once given to knights before battle to inspire courage.

In German folklore, places where **thyme** grows wild are said to be **blessed** by fairies.



MUMMIFICATION



In ancient Egypt, people who died were mummified to preserve their bodies. After cleaning and embalming the body of a dead person, it was wrapped in linen bandages, along with herbs such as thyme and mint. The herbs' fresh and fragrant scents were considered sacred.



Oregano

The leaves are most well known as the dried herb used on pizza toppings.

Coriander



The aromatic leaves have a tart, lemony flavor.



Herbs are plants that are used to flavor food, give perfume its smell, or provide medicinal qualities. Some have fragrant leaves or flowers that can be eaten fresh. Others are woody and added to cooking or used dried.

Using herbs dates back to ancient times. In ancient Greece, eating **thyme** was believed to cure poisoning, while **rosemary** was thought to help memory, and scholars used to put rosemary in their hair to help them during exams.



Thai basil

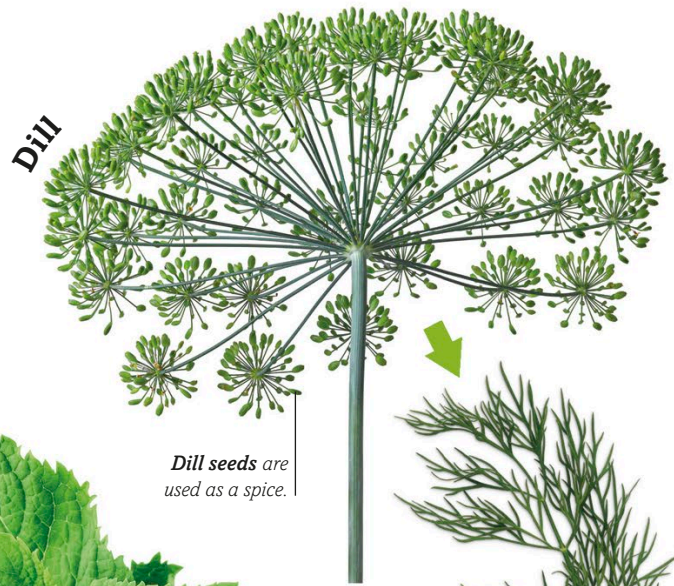
Spicy leaves taste like licorice and are used in Asian cooking.

In the past, these hairy, gray-green leaves were used to ward off evil.



Mint

These leaves are used in toothpaste and sweets.



Dill

Dill seeds are used as a spice.



These delicate, feathery leaves are often eaten with seafood.

Dill leaves



Sage

The leaves are used for flavoring food.



Rosemary

Needlelike rosemary leaves grow on woody plants that can reach up to 7 ft (2 m) tall.



Chives

The hollow, tubular stems taste like onion—and the flowers do, too!

In the Middle Ages, herb gardens were common in European monasteries: monks grew **sage** as a remedy and also to clean their teeth. The plant's scientific name, *Salvia*, comes from the Latin for "I am well." **Oregano** is also healing. In Chinese medicine, it is used to help digestive problems.

Modern science has proven some of the qualities of herbs—**mint** oil is known to kill mosquito larvae, for example. Other ideas are based on superstition, such as the medieval practice of drinking **dill** tea to repel a witch's curse.



Plant products

Plants provide many of the materials we use every day. From tree trunks we harvest timber to build houses, wood to turn into paper, and resins to make varnish. Dyes can be made from berries and leaves, and textiles from plant fibers. Some plants have many uses. In Malaysia, for example, the coconut palm is called the “tree of a thousand uses” because almost every part of this tree is useful.

Fruit ➤ The large, smooth fruits of the coconut palm contain a seed known as the coconut. It has a hard, hairy shell and edible white flesh.

Coconut water, the liquid found inside the immature seed, is a delicious drink that is rich in nutrients.



Utensils, such as this cup, can be carved from coconut shells.



Ropes can be made from coir, the fibers of the coconut husk.



Oil is extracted from the white flesh for use in cooking.

Logs of coconut timber are often used in construction because they do not decay easily.



Musical instruments, such as this Hawaiian pahu drum, are made from coconut timber.



Trunk ➤ Coconut palms can grow up to 98 ½ ft (30 m) tall. Their slender, flexible trunks, which have a ringed pattern, allow them to bend rather than break in strong winds.



A male flower opens, sheds pollen, and falls off within a day.



Sugar is made from the sweet sap in the stalks of the flower buds.

Flower > Coconut flower stalks contain spikes growing from a fleshy stem. Male flowers grow at the tops of the spikes, while female ones grow at their base. Both types of flowers produce nectar to attract insects.

Coconut palm

Brooms are made from the stiff, dried midribs of coconut leaves.



Coconut leaves can grow up to 6 ft (1.8 m) wide.



Baskets can be made by weaving together the leaflets of coconut leaves.

Leaf > Mature coconut palms have around 35 leaves, each of which grows from a single bud at the top of the tree. Coconut leaves can grow up to 19 3/4 ft (6 m) in length.

Other plants and their products

Cotton

White fibers surround the seeds of the cotton plant. In the wild, these fibers drift off in the wind, carrying the seeds to new places to grow. The fibers can be removed from the seeds and spun into threads to make textiles.



Thread

Hemp

This was one of the first plants to be used for clothing. The long fibers that make up the stem of the plant are used to make threads that can be woven into fabrics or twisted into string.



String

Cork oak

The waterproof outer bark of the cork oak tree is used to make stoppers for bottles, floor tiles, and many other household objects. The bark grows slowly and is harvested once a decade.



Cork stopper

Layer of bark has been removed.

Rubber

The milky sap of the rubber tree is harvested by cutting a line into its trunk and collecting the liquid that drips out. When set, rubber is an elastic material used to make gloves, shoe soles, and tires.



Tire



SHRINKING FOREST Mist rises in the hot air above a mountain rain forest known as the Leuser Ecosystem, on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Dense with trees pushing up through the rain forest layers, the tallest rise 150–200 ft (45–60 m) to emerge above the canopy. This unique habitat is the last place where Sumatran orangutans, tigers, elephants, and rhinoceroses coexist in the wild.



Tropical rain forests cover around 6 percent of the world's land, yet produce 40 percent of all oxygen and are often called the lungs of the Earth. The Leuser Ecosystem covers around 10,100 sq miles (26,300 sq km), about the size of Massachusetts. However, rain forest cover in Indonesia is rapidly decreasing to make room for palm oil plantations,

hydroelectric dams, and farming. Increase in demand for lumber and wood pulp for paper has led to a rise in illegal logging. Human activity is putting many of the species of plants and animals in the region, which are not found anywhere else in the world, at risk of extinction. It also threatens the health of the whole planet.

Natural beauty

Ylang-ylang

Henna leaves are crushed before they can be used as hair dye or to decorate hands and feet for special occasions.



Henna



Hand decorated with henna

This scented paste is made from powdered sandalwood and is used as a skin cleanser.

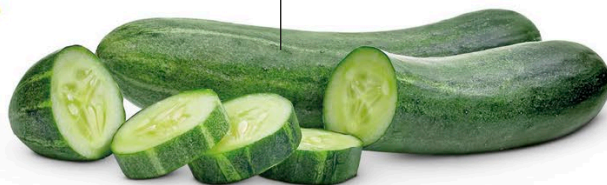


Sandalwood



Perfume

Cucumber extract has soothing properties and is used widely in skin care products.



Cucumber

Waxy yellow flowers have an exotic fragrance.

The yellow-gold oil is, in fact, a liquid wax made from seeds.



Jojoba

For thousands of years, people have used plant products to make themselves look and smell good. Floral fragrances and plant-based potions are still big business today, with many people preferring to use natural products rather than artificial ones.

Many different parts of plants are used to make beauty products. **Ylang-ylang** and **lavender** flowers each contain scents that can be distilled for use in perfumes. It is extracted by steaming. **Sandalwood** is just that—the aromatic, oily inner wood of a tree, which has



Nut butter



Shea

Fatty seeds are used to make shea butter, a popular moisturizer.



Lavender

Dried flowers are used to extract oil.

The fragrant oil has soothing, healing qualities.



Cocoa

Dried cocoa beans

Cocoa butter, made from the crushed insides of cocoa beans, is melted to make body creams.

Goats climb argan trees to eat the fruit and **disperse** the seeds in their droppings.



Argan

Oil extracted from the seed nourishes skin, hair, and nails.



Body scrub mixed with argan oil



Aloe vera

This thick, fleshy leaf has a gel-like sap inside.

Clear leaf sap is added to many skin care products for its soothing properties.

Inside an aloe vera leaf

Bath bombs infused with eucalyptus oil nourish hair and soothe the skin.



Eucalyptus bath bombs



Eucalyptus

natural antiseptic and healing qualities. While the seeds of the **shea** nut, kernels of the **argan** fruit, and **cocoa** beans must all be roasted in order to release their rich oils, the seeds of the **jojoba** plant can simply be crushed. It is the leaves of the **henna** plant that, when dried and mashed

to a paste, release a strong orange-brown dye. The sap inside the thick spiky leaves of the **aloe vera** plant is not only a soothing gel for burns but also has moisturizing properties. Cleopatra, the queen of ancient Egypt, attributed her great beauty to her use of aloe vera!



Plants of the world



Golden wattle
Australia

These huge flowers can grow up to 8 in (20 cm) across.



Australian postage stamps have featured its national flower—the fluffy golden wattle.



This 100-yen coin shows cherry blossoms that are celebrated in Japan each year in the spring festival hanami.



Cherry blossom Japan



The blue of this national flower is used on Estonia's flag to represent the country's sea, sky, and lakes.



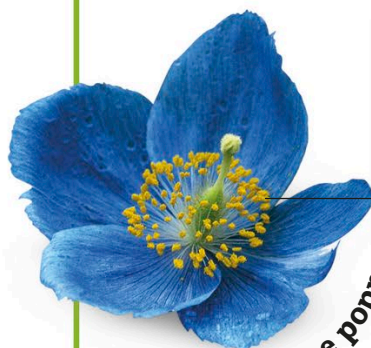
Cornflower
Estonia



Cattleya orchid
Brazil



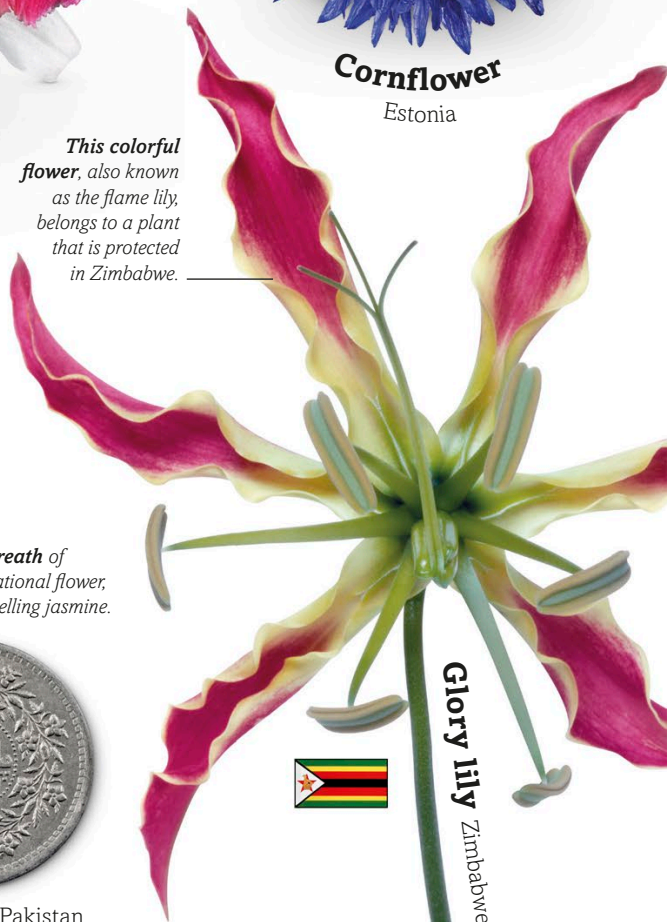
This wildflower from Bhutan has distinctive yellow or amber anthers.



Himalayan blue poppy
Bhutan



This colorful flower, also known as the flame lily, belongs to a plant that is protected in Zimbabwe.



Glory lily Zimbabwe



Coffee plant
Ethiopia

The arabica coffee plant originates in Ethiopia.



The maple leaf associated with Canada symbolizes unity, peace, and tolerance.



Maple
Canada



This is a wreath of Pakistan's national flower, the sweet-smelling jasmine.



Jasmine Pakistan

Rose of Sharon South Korea



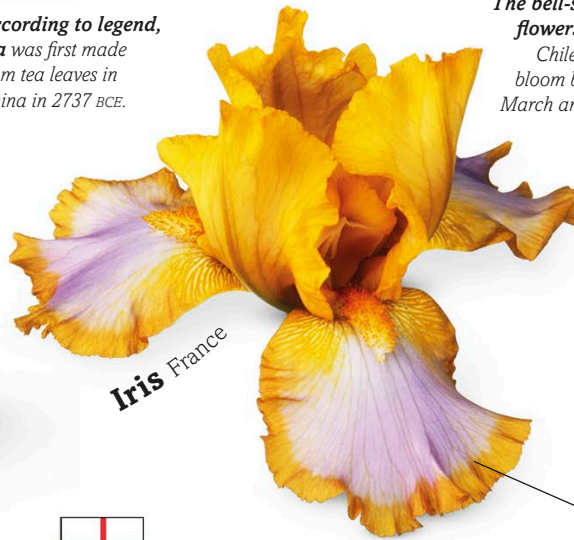
This flower is also known as mugunghwa, which means "eternal blossom that never fades."

Countries around the world often have a special connection to particular plants, rare or common. Many use flowers or trees as national symbols, often because these plants are culturally or spiritually important to the people living there.

Some countries choose a beautiful local flower to represent their nation, such as the showy **cattleya orchids** of Brazil and the **glory lily** of Zimbabwe. Australia observes Wattle Day on September 1 to celebrate the **golden wattle** that grows

**Tea** China

According to legend, tea was first made from tea leaves in China in 2737 BCE.

**Iris** France

The bell-shaped flowers of this Chilean vine bloom between March and May.

**Chilean bellflower**
Chile

This flower inspired the fleur-de-lis symbol, used by the kings of France.

**Rose** England

The rose was a symbol of royalty in England and later became the national flower.

The cone-shaped center holds the growing seeds.

**Lotus** India

The lotus is the sacred symbol of India, and represents purity and grace.

**Lavender** Portugal

Purple lavender flowers grow on spikes and appear across Portugal in the summer.

In Portugal, lavender was believed to ward off evil spirits.

across southern Australia as a sign of spring. The national flower of Bhutan, the **Himalayan blue poppy**, is so rare that it was once believed to be a myth and is called the "blue yeti." The national tree of Canada, the syrup-producing **maple** tree, is found in each of its provinces, and its leaf

features on the Canadian flag. The country that comes to mind when you say "tea" is China, the first to brew the hot drink from the plant's leaves—and the world's biggest producer today. In India, the national flower is the **lotus**. Hindu gods are often shown standing on this sacred flower.



Plant science

Although people have always relied on plants, the science of plants—known as botany—has been studied for only around 2,500 years. Early scientists described the medicinal properties of plants, while later researchers investigated them to learn how they survive and thrive.

350 BCE

Theophrastus, a student of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, is the first to study plants for their own sake. He writes the first botanical books, describing around 500 plants.



1200s

Arabian scientist Ibn al-Baytār writes the *Compendium on Simple Medicaments and Foods*, featuring the names of 1,400 plants, foods, drugs, and their uses.



Ibn al-Baytār was one of the most influential writers on botany in medieval times.

1600s

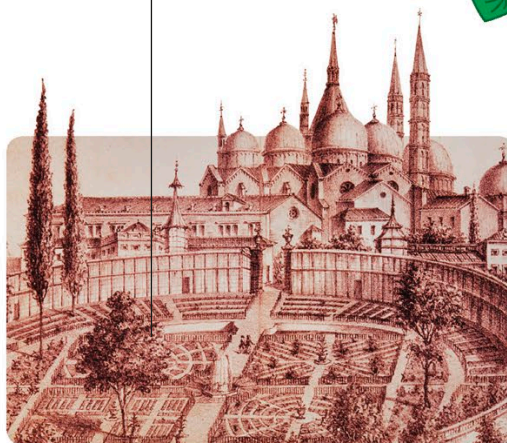
Hydroponics, a method of growing plants in a nutrient-filled liquid rather than in the soil, is first described in the 1600s. This technique can produce more food in the same space and is a popular method of growing plants today.

60 CE

Greek botanist Pedanius Dioscorides writes *De Materia Medica*, a book on medicinal plants, which is used for the next 1,500 years.



The garden exists today in its original location, in Padua, Italy.



1545

The world's oldest botanical garden, the *Orto Botanico di Padova*, is built. The garden was used to grow medicinal plants and teach students about them.

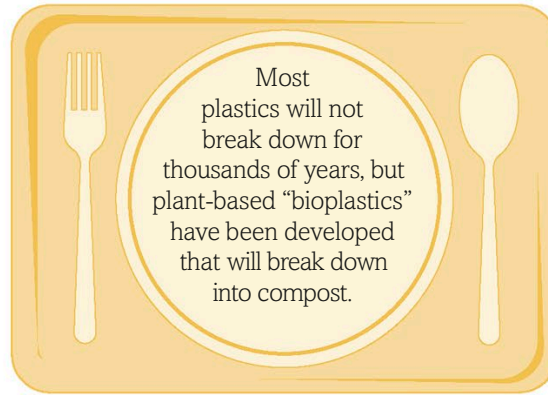
1561

The plant *Cordia sebestena* is named after German botanist Valerius Cordus. He describes plant features and medicinal properties for the first time in his book *Historia Plantarum*, published in 1561.



1789

English naturalist Gilbert White describes the time of year that different plants bloom. Today, scientists use this information to study how climate change is affecting flowering times.



Every kernel on one ear of corn is unique and can look different from one another.



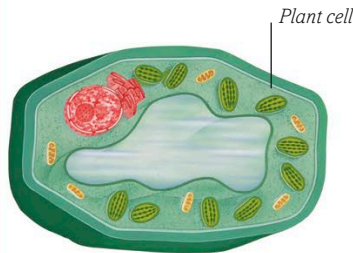
1800s

Austrian monk and scientist Gregor Mendel uses pea plants to explore how plants inherit their characteristics. Like humans, a plant gets half of its characteristics from the female plant and half from the male plant.



1838

German botanist Matthias Jakob Schleiden publishes *Contributions to Phytogenesis*, in which he argues that all plants are made of tiny units called cells.



1983

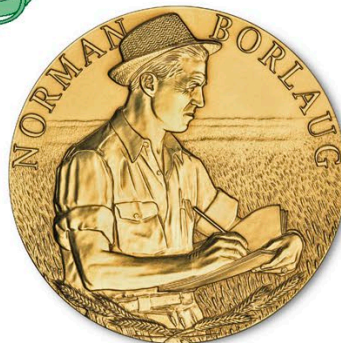
American scientist Barbara McClintock is awarded the Nobel Prize in 1983 for her research into the inheritance of corn (maize) traits and how this is controlled. This work has led to other important discoveries in the field of genetics.

2008

The Svalbard Global Seed Bank is built in Norway in 2008. This building stores seeds from around the world in case they are needed in the future.

1753

Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus publishes *Species Plantarum*, which establishes the scientific naming system for plant organisms.



1950s

American scientist Norman Borlaug develops a disease-resistant, dwarf wheat variety, which helps feed billions. Before the 1950s, tall wheat plants often blew over before the top-heavy crops could be harvested.



The book contains data on the 5,940 plants known at the time.





SPACE GARDEN Over millions of years of evolution, plants have become perfectly adapted for life on Earth. They are most certainly not adapted to growing in space, yet that is exactly what the plants shown here are doing. As part of an experiment on the International Space Station (ISS), its crew members are growing fresh vegetables in a “space garden” to try to improve their diet.



Plants are sensitive to their surroundings. Their roots grow toward sources of water, and their stems grow toward the light. They also react to gravity, growing up and away from its downward pull. In space, however, these plants are growing in zero gravity, with their roots held down by woven mats. The attraction of the artificial lights above them makes them

grow upright, like plants on Earth. They are given water containing vital nutrients, and the ISS crew breathes out the carbon dioxide the plants use to make the sugar they need to grow. In this process, the plants give off oxygen, which improves the air quality within the space station, while the sugar is turned into plant tissue that the crew can eat.

Glossary

Aerial root

A root that grows from the stem of a plant above the surface of the ground.

Algae

Plantlike, mostly water-dwelling, organisms such as seaweed, which contain the green pigment chlorophyll.

Anther

The part of the flower's stamen that produces pollen.

Bark

The tough outer layer of the roots, trunk, and branches of woody plants such as trees and shrubs.

Biofuel

A renewable fuel produced from plant matter, algae, or animal waste.

Bonsai

A tree or shrub grown in a pot and kept in miniature form by special pruning. Bonsai is also the name given to this type of pruning.

Bract

A specialized type of leaf. Bracts, sometimes brightly colored, help protect buds and flowers on some plants and can also serve to attract pollinators.

Bulb

Underground fleshy leaves that store food for a plant.

Buttress root

A root that grows out from the trunk of a tree, giving it extra support.

Canopy

An almost continuous layer of branches and leaves formed high above the ground by treetops.

Chlorophyll

A green pigment. Plants use the chlorophyll in their cells to harvest the energy in sunlight.

Compound leaf

A leaf that is divided into two or more leaflets.

Conifer

An evergreen tree or shrub that has needlelike leaves. All conifers bear cones.

Corm

A swollen, bulblike underground stem.

Cotyledon

The first food-storing leaf, or pair of leaves, formed inside a seed.

Deciduous

Describes a plant that sheds its leaves each year at the end of a growing season.

Dicot

A flowering plant that produces two seed leaves (cotyledons) when it first starts to grow.

Dormant

In an inactive state. Many plants become dormant in the winter or in times of drought, remaining alive but shutting down to save energy.

Drupe

A fleshy fruit, such as a plum or cherry, containing a single hard seed or stone.

Epiphyte

A plant that grows on another plant for support without taking nutrients from it.



Evergreen

A plant that keeps its leaves throughout the year.

Fertilization

The combination of a male cell from pollen and a female egg, which goes on to produce a young plant known as an embryo.

Floret

A small flower, usually one of many making up the head of a flower such as a daisy.

Fron

A long leaf that usually consists of smaller leaflets. They are seen in plants such as ferns and palms.

Fungus

Microorganisms including mushrooms and toadstools. Fungi are more closely related to animals than to plants.

Germination

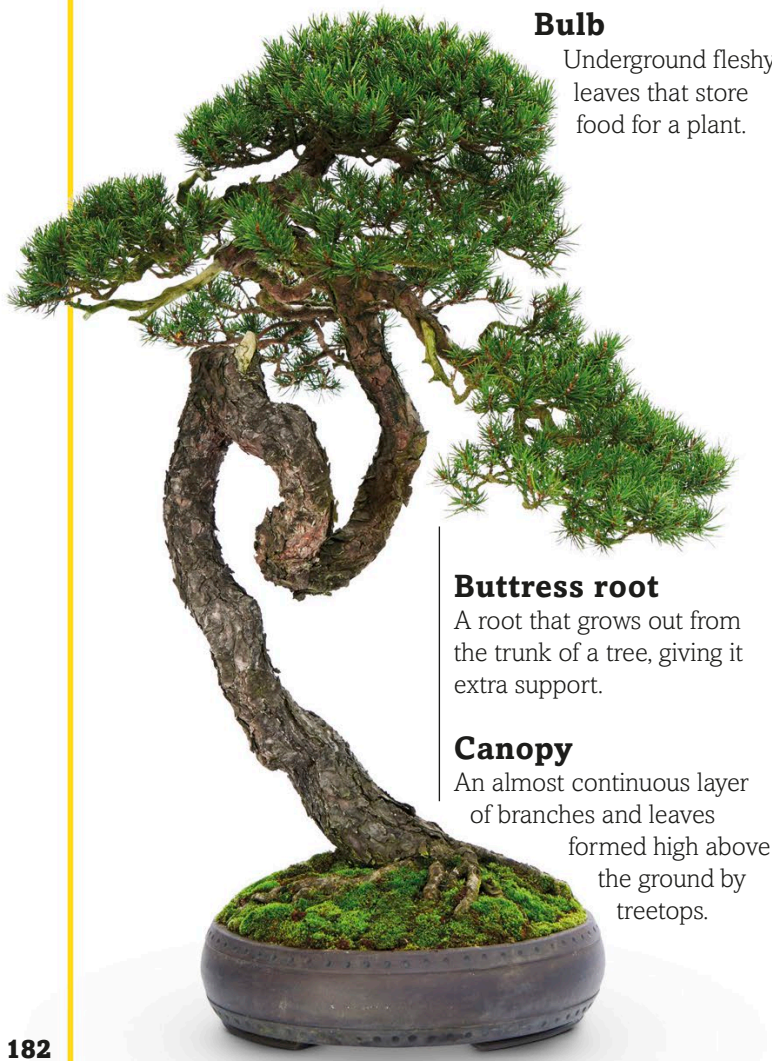
The process in which a seed starts to sprout and grow into a plant.

Harvest

The process of cutting and gathering crops from the field when ripe.

Host plant

A plant that is used by another for support and/or nutrients.



Inflorescence

A group of flowers on a single stem.

Kernel

A grain or the inner part of a fruit, stone, or nut.

Lateral root

A root that extends sideways from a main root to anchor a plant more firmly in the soil.

Leaflet

One of the smaller leaflike parts of a compound leaf growing from the leaf stalk.

Lenticel

One of the tiny pores on a plant stem that helps in the exchange of gases between the plant and its environment.

Lichen

An organism made up of a fungus and an alga, working together.

Monocot

A flowering plant that produces just one seed leaf (cotyledon) when it starts to grow.

Nectar

The sugary liquid produced by plants to attract pollinating animals.

Node

A point on a stem from which leaves, shoots, branches, or flowers can grow.

Nutrients

Minerals used by a plant to fuel its growth.

Parasitic plant

A plant that lives on another and takes nutrients from it.

Petals

The brightly colored parts of a flower that attract pollinating insects and birds to a plant.

Photosynthesis

The process by which a green plant uses the energy in sunlight to create food for itself from water in the soil and carbon dioxide in the air.

Plant

A living organism, from a moss to a tree, that produces its own food by photosynthesis.

Pneumatophore

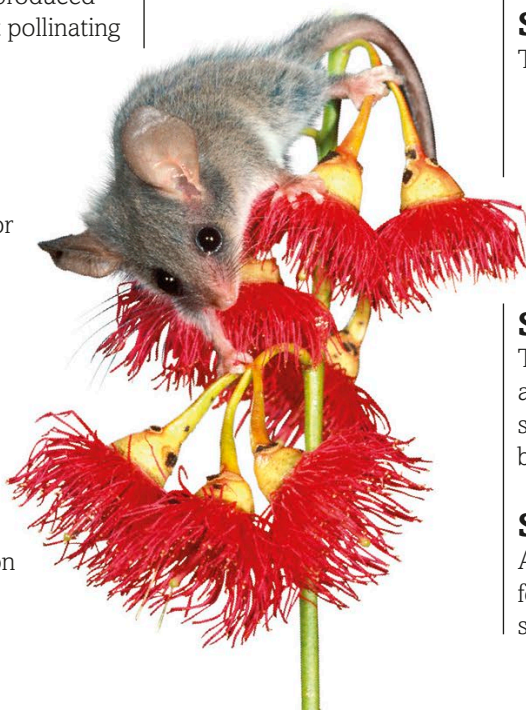
A straight aerial root that extends upward through swampy soil, enabling a plant to exchange gases, or "breathe."

Pollen

The tiny powdery grains that contain the male reproductive cells, which combine with the female reproductive cells of a plant to make seeds.

Pollination

The transfer of pollen grains from a male flower, or part of a flower, to the female parts of a flower, to fertilize the eggs so seeds can develop.

**Pollinator**

An animal, such as a bee, moth, or bird, that makes the fertilization of plants possible by moving pollen from flower to flower.

Rhizome

An underground stem that grows horizontally, putting out shoots and roots as it spreads.

Root hair

A microscopic hairlike growth that extends from a root and increases the amount of water and nutrients that a plant can take in.

Sap

The juices in plant cells.

Sepal

A small, leaflike flap, usually green, that surrounds and protects the petals of a flower.

Setting seed

The process in which a plant starts producing seeds after its flowers have been pollinated.

Spore

A tiny reproductive structure found in nonflowering plants such as ferns.

**Stamen**

The male part of a flower that includes the pollen-producing anther.

Stigma

The female part of a flower.

Succulent

A plant that stores water in thickened, fleshy leaves or stems. Succulents include cacti.

Taproot

A thick, central root that grows straight downward.

Tendrils

A threadlike, twining stalk that vine plants use to attach themselves to a supporting object.

Tepal

A flap around flowers that functions as both a sepal and a petal.

Tuber

A thick underground stem or root that some plants use for storing nutrients.

Vine

A plant that climbs or trails along the ground, supporting its stem with tendrils or by twining itself around a supporting object.

Plant index

In this book, plants are called by their “common names”—the names used in everyday life by ordinary people, and which can vary from country to country. However, when scientists around the world talk about a plant, to avoid confusion, they use its scientific name. This is based on an internationally recognized naming system and is in Latin. A plant’s scientific name is made up of two parts: the first is the genus, or group, of plants it comes from, and the second is the name of the specific species.

A

- Acai berry** *Euterpe oleracea* 142
Acorn *Quercus robur* 25, 150
Adzuki bean *Vigna angularis* 154, 165
African moringa *Moringa stenopetala* 95
Alder *Alnus* 25
Allspice *Pimenta dioica* 166
Almond *Prunus dulcis* 150
Aloe vera *Aloe vera* 174–175
Alpine pink *Dianthus alpinus* 104
Alpine spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis* 104
Amaryllis *Hippeastrum* 80
Amazonian water lily *Victoria amazonica* 32–33
American beech *Fagus grandifolia* 112
American eelgrass *Vallisneria spiralis* 84–85
American pearl laceleaf *Anthurium scandens* 15
American sycamore *Platanus occidentalis* 113
Angel wings *Caladium bicolor* 7, 36
Ant fern *Lecanopteris* 40, 53
Antarctic hair grass *Deschampsia antarctica* 128
Apple *Malus* 30–31, 117, 135



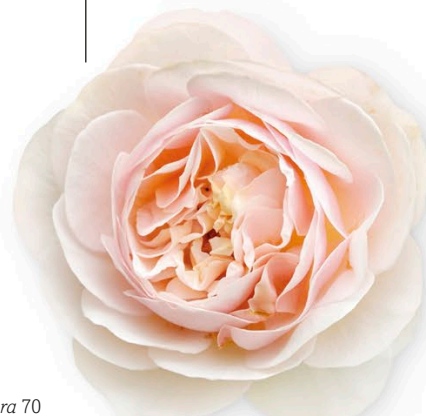
- Apricot** *Prunus armeniaca* 143
Argan *Argania spinosa* 175
Arrowhead *Sagittaria* 136
Artichoke *Cynara scolymus* 165
Arugula *Eruca sativa* 152
Arum lily *Zantedeschia aethiopica* 67
Asian bleeding heart *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* 70
Asparagus *Asparagus officinalis* 134–135, 160
Atlas cedar *Cedrus atlantica* 58, 61
Australian Christmas tree *Nuytsia floribunda* 102–103
Austrian pine *Pinus nigra* 6, 56–57
Avocado *Persea americana* 22

B

- Bamboo** *Bambusa vulgaris* 27, 161
Banana *Musa* 68, 134
Banks' rose *Rosa banksiae* 74
Barley *Hordeum vulgare* 22, 131
Barrel cactus *Echinocactus grusonii* 91, 92
Baseball plant *Euphorbia obesa* 95
Bat-faced cuphea *Cuphea llavea* 70
Bean *Phaseolus vulgaris* 21
Bee orchid *Ophrys apifera* 70–71
Beech *Fagus* 26, 109
Beet *Beta vulgaris* 22, 136
Begonia *Begonia* hybrid 37
Belladonna *Atropa belladonna* 100
Bilberry cactus *Myrtillocactus geometrizans* 92
Bird-of-paradise plant *Strelitzia reginae* 66–67
Bird's nest fern *Asplenium nidus* 118
Bishop's cap cactus *Astrophytum myriostigma* 93
Bitter melon *Momordica charantia* 148–149
Black currant *Ribes nigrum* 138
Black pepper *Piper nigrum* 167
Black-eyed peas *Vigna unguiculata* 154
Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus* 24, 138
Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* 117
Bladderwort *Utricularia* 99
Blanket flower *Gaillardia* 76
Blood orange *Citrus sinensis* 144
Blue agave *Agave tequilana* 40
Blue fescue *Festuca glauca* 128
Blue hubbard squash *Cucurbita maxima* 157
Blue spruce *Picea pungens* 59
Blueberry *Vaccinium cyanococcus* 139
Bok choy *Brassica rapa* var. *chinensis* 153
Borlotti beans *Phaseolus vulgaris* 155
Bougainvillea *Bougainvillea* 106
Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* 53
Bradford pear *Pyrus calleryana* 82
Brazil nut *Bertholletia excelsa* 151
Brazilian waterweed *Egeria densa* 85
Bristlecone pine *Pinus* 58
Broadleaf stonecrop *Sedum spathulifolium* 104
Broom forkmoss *Dicranum scoparium* 122
Brussels sprouts *Brassica oleracea* 152
Bryum moss *Bryum capillare* 46–47
Buddha's hand *Citrus medica* var. *sarcodactylis* 144–145
Buddleia *Buddleja davidii* 69
Bulbophyllum *Bulbophyllum* 78
Burdock *Arctium lappa* 14–15, 24
Butter and eggs *Triphysaria eriantha* 103
Butterfly agave *Agave potatorum* 36–37
Butternut squash *Cucurbita moschata* 157
Butterwort *Pinguicula cyclosecta* 99

C

- Cabbage** *Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* 134
Cactus mistletoe *Tristerix aphyllus* 102
Calypso orchid *Calypso bulbosa* 122
Camel thorn *Acacia erioloba* 40, 94
Candelabra primrose *Primula bulleyana* 87
Cardoon *Cynara cardunculus* 160
Carrion plant *Stapelia gigantea* 82
Carrot *Daucus carota* 134, 136–137
Carrot fern *Onychium japonicum* 53
Cashew *Anacardium occidentale* 151
Cassava *Manihot esculenta* 137
Castor oil plant *Ricinus communis* 101,
Cattail *Typha latifolia* 86
Cattleya orchid *Cattleya* 176
Cattleya purpurata *Cattleya purpurata* var. *coerulea* 79
Celeriac *Apium graveolens* var. *rapaceum* 160
Century plant *Agave americana* 94
Charentais melon *Cucumis melo* var. *cantalupensis* 149
Cherry *Prunus avium* 142
Cherry blossom *Prunus serrulata* 72–73, 176
Chickpea *Cicer arietinum* 154
Chicory *Cichorium intybus* 77
Chikoo *Manilkara zapota* 147
Chile pepper *Capsicum annuum* 166
Chilean bellflower *Lapageria rosea* 177
Chinese bayberry *Myrica rubra* 139
Chinese elm *Ulmus parvifolia* 125
Chinese fringetree *Chionanthus retusus* 116–117
Chinese juniper *Juniperus chinensis* 125
Chinese redbud *Cercis chinensis* 116
Chinese rose *Rosa chinensis* 11, 74–75
Chives *Allium schoenoprasum* 169
Christmas cactus *Schlumbergera truncata* 93
Cinnamon *Cinnamomum* 167
Citron *Citrus medica* 145
Clematis *Clematis* 107
Cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus* 138
Clumping bamboo *Fargesia murielae* 128
Coast redwood *Sequoia sempervirens* 112, 114–115
Cobra plant *Darlingtonia californica* 98
Cobweb house-leek *Sempervivum arachnoideum* 104–105
Coco de mer *Lodoicea maldivica* 23
Cocoa *Theobroma cacao* 175
Coconut palm *Cocos nucifera* 11, 25, 111, 150, 170–171
Coffee *Coffea* 22, 176
Common eelgrass *Zostera marina* 85
Common daisy *Bellis perennis* 77
Common fig *Ficus carica* 111, 135
Common haircap *Polytrichum commune* 49
Common juniper *Juniperus communis* 60
Common kettlewort *Blasia pusilla* 48
Common liverwort *Marchantia polymorpha* 10, 49
Common maidenhair fern *Adiantum aethiopicum* 53

**Common milkweed***Asclepias syriaca* 41**Common snowberry***Symphoricarpos albus* 87**Common tamarisk moss** *Thuidium tamariscinum* 48**Coneflower** *Echinacea* 76**Coriander** *Coriandrum sativum* 22, 168**Cork oak** *Quercus suber* 171**Corkscrew hazel** *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' 16–17**Corn** *Zea mays* 21, 23, 131, 164**Cornflower** *Centaurea cyanus* 6, 176**Corpse lily** *Rafflesia arnoldii* 103**Cotton** *Gossypium hirsutum* 171**Coulter pine** *Pinus coulteri* 60**Crab apple** *Malus sylvestris* 124**Crack willow** *Salix fragilis* 113**Cranberry** *Vaccinium macrocarpon* 138**Crenshaw melon** *Cucumis melo* 148**Crimson glory***Rosa* 'Crimson Glory' 75**Crookneck squash***Cucurbita moschata* 156**Crowfoot grass***Dactyloctenium aegyptium* 128**Crown imperial** *Fritillaria imperialis* 82**Cucamelon** *Melothria scabra* 148**Cucumber** *Cucumis sativus* 12–13, 157, 174**Cuipo** *Cavanillesia platanifolia* 25**Cumin** *Cuminum cyminum* 166**Curly parsley** *Petroselinum crispum* 168**Cushaw pumpkin***Cucurbita argyrosperma* 156**Cycad** *Cycas revoluta* 57**D****Daffodil** *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* 80**Dahlia** *Dahlia* 36–37**Daikon** *Raphanus sativus* 137**Damson** *Prunus domestica* var. *insititia* 143**Dancing ladies orchid** *Oncidium* 71, 119**Dandelion** *Taraxacum officinale* 24–25, 32, 136**Darth Vader plant** *Aristolochia salvadorensis* 70**Date** *Phoenix dactylifera* 143**Dead horse arum***Helicodiceros muscivorus* 83**Deodar cedar** *Cedrus deodara* 58**Dill** *Anethum graveolens* 'Mariska' 169**Dodder** *Cuscuta* 102**Dog rose** *Rosa canina* 74**Dragon arum** *Dracunculus vulgaris* 82**Dragon fruit** *Hylocereus undatus* 147**Dragon's blood tree***Dracaena cinnabari* 110–111**Durian** *Durio zibethinus* 82–83, 147**Durum wheat** *Triticum**turgidum* var. *durum* 131**Dwarf iris** *Iris danfordiae* 81**Dwarf pomegranate** *Punica granatum* var. *nana* 125**E–G****Echeveria** *Echeveria* 94**Elderberry** *Sambucus nigra* 110**Elephant grass***Ormiscanthus giganteus* 129**Elephant's ear** *Alocasia x amazonica* 33**Endive** *Cichorium endivia* 153**English ivy** *Hedera helix* 16, 32, 107**English oak** *Quercus robur* 33, 111, 113**English walnut** *Juglans regia* 150**Epicattleya Rene Marques***Epicattleya* 'Rene Marques' 78**Eucalyptus** *Eucalyptus* 33, 68, 111, 175**European holly** *Ilex aquifolium* 111**European larch** *Larix decidua* 60**European silver fir** *Abies alba* 59**Everlasting pea** *Lathyrus latifolia* 106**Eyebright** *Euphrasia rostkoviana* 103**False saguaro cactus***Pachycereus pringlei* 93**Fanwort** *Cabomba aquatica* 84**Fava beans** *Vicia faba* 154**Fawn lily** *Erythronium revolutum* 123**Fennel** *Foeniculum vulgare* 161**Fenugreek** *Trigonella foenum-graecum* 167**Figaro dahlia** *Dahlia hybrida* 10**Fir clubmoss** *Huperzia selago* 49**Fissidens moss** *Fissidens fontanus* 118**Flame vine** *Pyrostegia venusta* 107**Flamingo lily** *Anthurium* 36**Flat-leaf parsley** *Petroselinum crispum* 168**Flowering rush** *Butomus umbellatus* 84**Forest star moss** *Mnium hornum* 48**Forget-me-not** *Myosotis alpestris* 104**Four-leaved pink sorrel***Oxalis tetraphylla* 35**Foxglove** *Digitalis purpurea* 66**Frangipani** *Plumeria rubra* 66**Gac** *Momordica cochinchinensis* 148**Garlic** *Allium sativum* 161**Geranium** *Pelargonium* 36**Ghost gum** *Corymbia aparreninja* 113**Giant onion** *Allium giganteum* 81**Giant rhubarb** *Gunnera manicata* 86**Ginger** *Zingiber officinale* 167**Ginkgo** *Ginkgo biloba* 33, 57, 83, 110**Glittering wood moss***Hylocomium splendens* 48**Globe thistle** *Echinops ritro* 76**Glory lily** *Gloriosa superba* 176–177**Goji berry** *Lycium barbarum* 138**Golden wattle** *Acacia pycnantha* 176**Goose** *Ulex* 41**Gourd** *Lagenaria siceraria* 157**Grape** *Vitis vinifera* 43, 139, 140–141**Grapefruit** *Citrus paradisi* 145**Green almond** *Prunus dulcis* 142–143**Green cardamom** *Elettaria**cardamomum* 167**Green pumpkin** *Cucurbita pepo* 156**Guava** *Psidium guajava* 147**Guelder rose** *Viburnum opulus* 67**H–K****Hair-awn muhly grass***Muhlenbergia capillaris* 129**Hairy-leafed apitong***Dipterocarpaceae* 22**Haleakala silversword***Argyroxiphium sandwicense* var. *macrocephalum* 105**Hares-tail grass** *Lagurus ovatus* 129**Hart's tongue fern***Asplenium scolopendrium* 52**Heart leaf fern** *Hemionitis arifolia* 53**Heart of palm** *Bactris gasipaes* 160**Helosis** *Helosis cayennensis* 102**Hemlock** *Conium maculatum* 100**Hemp** *Cannabis sativa* 171**Henna** *Lawsonia inermis* 174**Himalayan blue poppy***Meconopsis grandis* 176**Himalayan may apple***Podophyllum hexandrum* 105**Holly** *Ilex* 32, 37**Honey locust***Gleditsia triacanthos* 34–35**Honeydew melon** *Cucumis melo* var. 'Honey Dew' 149**Horned melon***Cucumis metuliferus* 149**Hornwort***Ceratophyllum demersum* 84**Horse chestnut***Aesculus hippocastanum* 23, 35**Hosta** *Hosta fortunei* var. *hyacinthina* 122**Hot lips** *Psychotria elata* 71**Hubbard squash** *Cucurbita maxima* 157**Hyacinth** *Hyacinthus* 81**Iceberg rose** *Rosa* 'Schneewittchen' 75**Indian pipe** *Monotropa uniflora* 70**Iris** *Iris* 26, 177**Ivy broomrape***Orobanche hederæ* 102**Jacaranda** *Jacaranda mimosifolia* 117**Jack-in-the-pulpit***Arisaema triphyllum* 123**Jackal food** *Hydnora africana* 82**Jackfruit** *Artocarpus heterophyllum* 146**Jamaican tangelo** *Citrus reticulata* x *Citrus paradisi* 145**Japanese blood grass***Imperata cylindrica* 129**Japanese holly fern***Cyrtomium falcatum* 52**Japanese maple** *Acer palmatum* 125**Japanese painted fern** *Athyrium**niponicum pictum* 'Metallicum' 53**Japanese winterberry** *Ilex serrata* 124**Japanese wisteria** *Wisteria floribunda* 124**Jasmine** *Jasminum officinale* 176**Javan cucumber***Alsomitra macrocarpa* 22–23**Jobba** *Simmondsia chinensis* 174**Joshua tree** *Yucca brevifolia* 111**Jujube** *Ziziphus jujuba* 142**Juliet rose** *Rosa* 'Sweet Juliet' 75**Kaffir lime** *Citrus hystrix* 145**Kajari melon** *Cucumis melo* 148**Kale** *Brassica oleracea* 153**Kauri** *Agathis australis* 60**Key lime** *Citrus aurantifolia* 145**Kiaat** *Pterocarpus angolensis* 22**King protea** *Protea cynaroides* 67**Kiwi** *Actinidia deliciosa* 134**Kohlrabi** *Brassica oleracea* 161**Korean fir** *Abies koreana* 61**Korean melon** *Cucumis melo* var. *makuwa* 149**Kumquat** *Citrus japonica* 145**L–M****Laburnum** *Laburnum anagyroides* 116–117**Lady's slipper orchid***Cypripedioideae* 122**Lamb's ear** *Stachys byzantina* 40**Large duck orchid***Caleana major* 71



Large-flowered trillium *Trillium grandiflorum* 123
Lavender *Lavandula angustifolia* 175, 177
Lebanon cedar *Cedrus libani* 59
Leek *Allium ampeloprasum* 80–81, 160
Lemon *Citrus limon* 145
Lentil *Lens culinaris* 23, 154
Lettuce *Lactuca sativa* 152
Lily of the valley *Convallaria majalis* 100
Lima bean *Phaseolus lunatus* 154–155
Lingonberry *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* 138
Little bluestem *Schizachyrium scoparium* 10
Living stone *Lithops helmutii* 95
Llaretta *Azorella compacta* 94
Lodgepole pine *Pinus contorta* 11, 60
Long strap fern *Campyloneurum phyllitidis* 119
Long-petaled lewisia *Lewisia longipetala* 105
Lotus *Nelumbo nucifera* 24, 136, 177
Love in a puff *Cardiospermum halicacabum* 22
Luffa *Luffa acutangula* 157
Lupine *Lupinus* 11, 34
Lychee *Litchi chinensis* 147
Macadamia *Macadamia integrifolia* 150
Magnolia *Magnolia* 117
Male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* 50–51, 52
Manchineel *Hippomane mancinella* 101
Manchurian striped maple *Acer tegmentosum* 112
Mango *Mangifera indica* 142
Mangosteen *Garcinia mangostana* 147
Maple *Acer* 31, 176
Marsh clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata* 48
Marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* 69, 86
Maui-island aster *Hesperomannia arbuscula* 76
Meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* 126

Meadow horsetail *Equisetum pratense* 48–49
Mediterranean cypress *Cupressus sempervirens* 110
Mexican fire barrel *Ferocactus pilosus* 93
Milk thistle *Silybum marianum* 25
Mint *Mentha* 26, 169
Mistletoe *Viscum album* 102
Mock orange *Philadelphus coronarius* 116
Monk's hood cactus *Astrophytum ornatum* 90–91
Monkey puzzle tree *Araucaria araucana* 60
Moth orchid *Phalaenopsis* 78
Mother of thousands *Kalanchoe daigremontiana* 26
Mountain buttercup *Ranunculus montanus* 105
Mulberry *Morus* 138
Mung beans *Vigna radiata* 155
Munstead wood *Rosa* 'Munstead Wood' 74
Musk rose *Rosa moschata* 75
Mustard *Brassica* 167
Mutisia *Mutisia* 77

N–O

Naked man orchid *Orchis italica* 70
Nasturtium *Tropaeolum* 32
Necklace orchid *Pholidota imbricata* 119
Nectarine *Prunus persica* 143
Neon broom cactus *Arrojadoc penicillata* 93
Nerine *Nerine bowdenii* 80
Nordmann fir *Abies nordmanniana* 111
Norway maple *Acer platanoides* 25, 108–109
Norway spruce *Picea abies* 61
Nun orchid *Phaius tankervilleae* 79
Nutmeg *Myristica fragrans* 167
Oat *Avena sativa* 130
Oca *Oxalis tuberosa* 137
Old man cactus *Cephalocereus senilis* 93
Old man of the Andes *Oreocereus leucotrichus* 11
Oleander *Nerium oleander* 101
Olive *Olea europaea* 142–143
Oncidium *Oncidium coeresus* 78
Onion *Allium cepa* 160
Orange *Citrus sinensis* 144
Oregano *Origanum vulgare* 168
Organ pipe cactus *Stenocereus thurberi* 92
Oriental fountain grass *Pennisetum orientale* 129
Orthotrichum moss *Orthotrichum anomalum* 119
Ostrich fern *Matteuccia struthiopteris* 52–53
Outeniqua yellowwood *Afrocarpus falcatus* 60
Overnight scentsation *Rosa* 'Overnight scentsation' 60

P–R

Pampas grass *Cortaderia selloana* 129
Papaya *Carica papaya* 146
Parrot flower *Impatiens psittacina* 70
Parrot's feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum* 85
Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* 136
Passion flower *Passiflora helleri* 41
Passion fruit *Passiflora edulis* 146
Pattypan squash *Cucurbita pepo* 157
Pea *Pisum sativum* 155, 179
Peach *Prunus persica* 22, 142
Peanut *Arachis hypogaea* 151
Pear *Pyrus communis* 135
Pearl millet *Pennisetum glaucum* 131
Pecan *Carya illinoensis* 151
Persian cornflower *Centaurea dealbata* 77
Persimmon *Diospyros* 112, 146
Petunia *Petunia cultivars* 37
Pincushion moss *Leucobryum glaucum* 123
Pine *Pinus* 113
Pine nut *Pinus gerardiana* 151
Pineapple *Ananas comosus* 146
Pineapple lily *Eucomis bicolor* 82
Pineapple zamia *Macrozamia lucida* 61
Pink quill *Tillandsia cyanea* 67
Pink wood sorrel *Oxalis debilis* 80
Pistachio *Pistacia vera* 150
Pitch pine *Pinus rigida* 61
Plum *Prunus domestica* 142
Pomegranate *Punica granatum* 22
Pomelo *Citrus maxima* 35, 144, 165
Pong pong *Cerbera odollam* 101
Poppy *Papaver* 22, 28–29, 67
Pot marigold *Calendula officinalis* 22
Potato *Solanum tuberosum* 137
Powdery strap airplant *Catopsis berteroniana* 98
Prayer plant *Calathea* 37
Prickly pear *Opuntia* 91, 92–93
Primrose *Primula vulgaris* 66
Prostrate speedwell *Veronica prostrata* 105
Pumpkin *Cucurbita pepo* 156, 158–159

Purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* 87
Purple pussypaws *Cistanthe umbellata* 96–97
Queen of the Andes *Puya raimondii* 28
Queen of the Night *Epiphyllum oxypetalum* 91
Queen Victoria agave *Agave victoria-reginae* 95
Radicchio *Cichorium intybus* 152, 165
Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* 137
Rainbow chard *Beta vulgaris* var. *vulgaris* 152–153
Rainbow eucalyptus *Eucalyptus deglupta* 112–113
Rambutan *Nephelium lappaceum* 146–147
Raspberry *Rubus idaeus* 138
Red cabbage *Brassica oleracea* 153
Red cross orchid *Epidendrum radicans* 78
Red currant *Ribes rubrum* 138
Red disa *Disa uniflora* 79
Red hot poker *Kniphofia uvaria* 67
Red powderpuff *Calliandra haematocephala* 66
Resurrection plant *Selaginella lepidophylla* 94
Rhubarb *Rheum rhabarbarum* 135, 160
Rice *Oryza sativa* 130–131, 132–133
Rosa Mundi *Rosa officinalis* 'Versicolor' 75
Rosary pea *Abrus precatorius* 100
Rose *Rosa* 37, 41
Rose *Rosa hybrida* 177
Rose of Sharon *Hibiscus syriacus* 176
Rosemary *Rosmarinus officinalis* 169
Rough horsetail *Equisetum hyemale* 87
Royal poinciana *Delonix regia* 116
Rubber *Hevea brasiliensis* 171
Rubber tree *Ficus elastica* 18–19
Runner bean *Phaseolus coccineus* 154
Rutabaga *Brassica napobrassica* 137
Rye *Secale cereale* 131



S–T

- Sacred fir** *Abies religiosa* 58
Saffron *Crocus sativus* 167
Sage *Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurascens' 168–169
Saguaro *Carnegiea gigantea* 69, 91, 92
Samphire *Salicornia europaea* 161
Sandalwood *Santalum album* 174
Santa Claus melon *Cucumis melo* 'Santa Claus' 149
Satsuki azalea *Rhododendron indicum* 124–125
Savoy cabbage *Brassica oleracea* var. *sabauda* 152
Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* 124
Sensitive plant *Mimosa pudica* 34
Serpentine sugarbush *Protea curvata* 104
Sesame *Sesamum indicum* 166
Shea *Vitellaria paradoxa* 175
Siberian dwarf pine *Pinus pumila* 58
Silk floss *Ceiba speciosa* 112
Silver birch *Betula pendula* 33
Silver fern *Cyathea dealbata* 35
Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis* 59
Slipper orchid *Paphiopedilum* 79
Sloe *Prunus spinosa* 143
Smooth hornwort *Phaeoceros laevis* 10
Snapdragon *Antirrhinum majus* 70
Snow pea *Pisum sativum* var. *saccharatum* 11, 155
Snowy woodrush *Luzula nivea* 127
Soft rush *Juncus effusus* 87
Soft shield fern *Polystichum setiferum* 52
Soft tree fern *Dicksonia antarctica* 11, 52
Sorghum *Sorghum bicolor* 130
Soybeans *Glycine max* 155
Spangle grass *Chasmanthium latifolium* 128–129
Spanish moss *Tillandsia usneoides* 118

- Sphagnum** *Sphagnum* 49
Spider plant *Chlorophytum comosum* 27–28
Spinach *Spinacia oleracea* 153
Spotted fritillary *Fritillaria atropurpurea* 105
Squill *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* 122
Staghorn fern *Platycerium superbum* 118–119
Stanhopea *Stanhopea wardii* 79
Star anise *Illicium verum* 167
Star fruit *Averrhoa carambola* 146
Star jasmine *Trachelospermum jasminoides* 106
Star moss *Tortula ruralis* 10
Stiff clubmoss *Lycopodium annotinum* 10
Stiffia *Stiffia chrysanthra* 76
Stinging nettle *Urtica dioica* 41
Stinking iris *Iris foetidissima* 83
Stinking toe *Hymenaea courbaril* 34
Strangler fig *Ficus religiosa* 120–121
Strawberry *Fragaria* 21, 27, 134, 139
Sugar maple *Acer saccharum* 32, 110
Sugar pine *Pinus lambertiana* 59, 61
Sugarcane *Saccharum officinarum* 16, 130
Sun pitcher plant *Heliamphora heterodoxa* x *minor* 99
Sun rose *Cistus* x *argenteus* 'Peggy Sammons' 17
Sunblest rose *Rosa* 'landora' 74
Sundew *Drosera capensis* 99
Sunflower *Helianthus* 22, 38–39, 77
Swamp rose mallow *Hibiscus moscheutos* 86
Sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* 151
Sweet pea *Lathyrus odoratus* 67
Sweet potato *Ipomoea batatas* 27
Sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* 126–127
Swiss cheese plant *Monstera deliciosa* 32
Sword fern *Nephrolepis exaltata* 123
Tamarack larch *Larix laricina* 59
Tamarind *Tamarindus indica* 34
Taro *Colocasia esculenta* 137
Tea *Camellia sinensis* 40, 177
Teosinte *Zea mays parviglumis* 164
Tepary beans *Phaseolus acutifolius* 155
Tephrocactus *Tephrocactus aoracanthus* 93



- Thai basil** *Ocimum basilicum* 169
Thistle *Cirsium* 40
Thurber's stemsucker *Pilosyles thurberi* 102
Thyme *Thymus vulgaris* 168
Tibetan cherry *Prunus serrula* 113
Tiger lily *Lilium tigrinum* 64–65
Tigger melon *Cucumis melo* 148
Tillandsia air plant *Tillandsia* 118
Titan arum *Amorphophallus titanum* 83
Tomato *Solanum lycopersicum* 135
Treasure flower *Gazania rigens* 76
Tromboncino *Cucurbita moschata* 157
Tropical pitcher plant *Nepenthes* x *red leopard* 98–99
Trumpet pitcher plant *Sarracenia* 99
Tulip *Tulipa* 36, 81
Turkish hazelnut *Corylus colurna* 150–151
Turmeric *Curcuma longa* 166–167
Turnip *Brassica rapa* subsp. *rapa* 136
Twisted moss *Tortula ruralis* 48

U–V

- Umbrella grass** *Cyperus alternifolius* 85
Valerian *Valeriana officinalis* 83
Vanda *Vanda* 79
Vanda orchid *Vanda Gaud* 11
Vanilla *Vanilla* 167
Velvet feather-moss *Brachythecium velutinum* 49
Venus flytrap *Dionaea muscipula* 98
Virginia creeper *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* 107
Virginia waterleaf *Hydrophyllum virginianum* 36

W–Z

- Wasabi** *Eutrema japonicum* 167
Water chestnut *Eleocharis dulcis* 161
Water hawthorn *Aponogeton distachyos* 85
Water hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes* 84
Water lettuce *Pistia stratiotes* 85
Water lily *Nymphaea* 84
Water spearmint *Mentha cervina* 87

- Watercress** *Nasturtium officinale* 153
Watermelon *Citrullus lanatus* 148
Waterwheel plant *Aldrovanda vesiculosa* 98
Wax plant *Hoya* 66
Welwitschia *Welwitschia mirabilis* 57
Wheat *Triticum* 33, 130
Whistling thorn acacia *Vachellia drepanolobium* 41
White baneberry *Actaea pachypoda* 100–101
White clover *Trifolium repens* 35
White egret flower *Pecteilis radiata* 71
White poplar *Populus alba* 113
White skunk cabbage *Lysichiton camtschatcensis* 87
White snakeroot *Ageratina altissima* 100
Whorl flower *Ainsliaea* 76
Wild desert gourd *Citrullus colocynthis* 95
Wild garlic *Allium ursinum* 122
Winged beans *Psophocarpus tetragonolobus* 154
Wisteria *Wisteria* 106
Wolfsbane *Aconitum napellus* 101
Wollemi pine *Wollemia nobilis* 60
Wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* 123
Yew *Taxus baccata* 101
Ylang-ylang *Cananga odorata* 174
Yubari King melon *Cucumis melo* 'Yubari King' 149
Zululand cycad *Encephalartos ferox* 60
Zygopetalum *Zygopetalum* 78



Index

A

acorns 25, 150
 aerial roots 15, 19
 African moringa 95
 agave 36, 40, 41, 94, 95
 algae 12
 almond 142, 143, 150, 151
 aloe vera 175
 alpine pink 104, 105
 alpiners 104–105
 Amaryllis 80, 81
 Amazonian water lily 32, 33
 American sycamore 113
 ancient plants 48–49
 see also ferns; mosses
 Andes, South America 28
 angel wing 36, 37
 angiosperms 11
 animals
 defenses against 40
 for seed spreading 24, 25
 grazing 43, 126
 ant fern 40, 53
 aphids 17
 apple 30–31, 116, 117,
 124, 135
 aquatic plants 84–85
 argan 175
 arrowhead plants 136
 arum lily 67
 asparagus 135, 160
 Atacama Desert, Chile
 96–97
 Australia 176
 Australian Christmas tree
 102, 103
 Austrian pine 56
 avocado 22

B

bamboo 26, 27, 128,
 129, 161
 banana 134
 barley 22, 131
 barrel cactus 91, 92
 baseball plant 95
 bats 68–69
 beans 154–155
 beauty products 165,
 174–175
 bee orchid 70, 71
 bees 65, 68, 71
 beet 136
 Belize 88–89
 belladonna 100
 Bhutan 176, 177
 bioplastics 179
 bird-of-paradise 66, 67
 birds 68–69
 bird's nest fern 119
 blackthorn 116, 117
 bladderwort 99
 blades 30, 127
 blossoms 72–73,
 116–117
 blue fescue 128, 129
 blue spruce 59
 bonsai trees 124–125
 Borlaug, Norman 179
 borlotti bean 155
 botanical gardens 178
 botany 178–179
 bougainvillea 106
 bracts 67
 Bradford pear 82, 83
 Brazil 176
 bridges 18–19
 bristlecone pine 58
 broadleaf stonecrop 104,
 105
 Brussels sprout 152,
 153
 Buddha's hand 144,
 145
 buds 28, 29, 108
 bulbs 80–81, 160–161
 burdock 14–15, 24, 25
 butter and eggs 103
 butterflies 41, 68, 69, 79
 butternut squash 157
 butterwort 99
 buttress roots 15

C

cabbage 134, 152, 153
 cacti 11, 90–91,
 92–93, 102
 cactus mistletoe
 102, 103
 California, US
 114–115
 camel thorn 40, 41, 94, 95
 Canada 176, 177
 candelabra primrose 87
 canopy, rain forest 119
 capsules 47
 cardoon 160, 161
 Caribbean Sea 88–89
 carnivorous plants 98–99
 carrion plant 82, 83
 carrot 134, 136, 137
 Cascade Range, California
 114–115
 cashew 151
 cassava 137
 castor oil plant 101
 cattail 86, 87
 cedars 58–59, 61
 celeriac 160
 century plant 94, 95
 cereal plants 130–131
 Charentais melon 148, 149
 cherry tree 72–73, 113, 117,
 142
 chestnut 151
 chickpea 154
 chicory 77
 Chile 96–97, 177
 chile pepper 166, 167
 China 177
 China rose 11, 74
 Chinese bayberry 138, 139
 Chinese elm 125
 Chinese juniper 125
 Chinese redbud 116, 117
 chlorophyll 12, 31, 43
 Christmas cactus 93
 citron 144, 145
 citrus fruits 144–145
 clematis 106, 107
 climbing plants 16, 91,
 106–107
 clothing fibers 165
 cloudberry 138, 139
 clubmoss 47, 48, 49
 coast redwood 112, 114–115
 cobweb house-leek 104, 105
 cocoa bean 175



coco de mer 22, 23
 coconut palm 25, 111, 150,
 151, 170–171
*Compendium on Simple
 Medicaments and Food* 178
 compound leaves 34–35
 cones 56–57, 58–59, 60–61
 conifers 54–55, 109, 110,
 114–115
 cones 56–57, 60–61
 pine family 58–59
Contributions in Phytogenesis
 179
 corals 12
 Cordus, Valerius 178
 coriander 22, 23, 168
 cork oak 171
 corkscrew hazel 17
 corms 136
 corn 131, 164, 179
 corpse lily 103
 cosmetics 165, 174–175
 cotton 171
 crab apple 124
 cranberry 138
 creeping plants 16, 106–107
 crimson glory rose 75
 crops 128, 131, 136, 154,
 164–165
 crown imperial plant 82, 83
 cucumber 13, 22, 148, 157,
 174
 cuipo 25
 culinary nut 150–151
 cycada 57
 cypress 110

D

daffodil 80, 81
 dahlia 36, 37
 daikon 136, 137
 daisies 10, 76–77
 dancing ladies orchid 70, 71
 dandelion 24, 25, 32, 136,
 137
 date 142, 143
 dead horse arum 83



deciduous trees 59, 109, 110, 111
 defenses 40–41
 bark 112, 113
 poison 40, 81, 95, 100–101, 143
 spines 41, 91, 92, 95, 112
 spots 37
 thorns 40–41, 95, 106
De Materia Medica 178
 desert plants 91, 92, 94–95, 97
 dicots 11, 21
 dill 169
 dinosaurs 54–55
 Dioscorides, Pedanius 178
 diseases 37, 112, 113
 dodder 102, 103
 dog rose 74, 75
 durians 82, 83, 147
 dwarf pomegranate 124, 125
 dye 116, 170, 175

E

echeveria 94
 edible bulbs 81, 160–161
 elderberry 110, 111
 elephant grass 129
 elephant's ear 33
 embryos 20, 21
 English ivy 16, 32, 107
 English oak 33, 111, 113
 acorns 25, 150
 English walnut 150, 151
 ephemeral plants 96–97, 123
 eucalyptus 110, 111, 113, 175
 European silver fir 59
 evergreen trees 59, 109, 110–111
 everlasting pea 106
 extinction 51, 79, 173
 eyebright 103

F

false saguaro cactus 92, 93
 fanwort 84, 85
 farming 132–133, 165
 fava bean 154, 155
 fennel 161
 ferns 11, 46, 50–51, 52–53, 54–55, 123
 living on other plants 118–119
 Fibonacci sequence 39
 fiddleheads 50
 fig 111, 120–121, 135
 fir 58–59, 60–61, 110–111

fissidens moss 118
 flakes 91
 flame vine 107
 flamingo lily 36
 florets 38–39
 flowering rushes 84, 85
 flowers 12, 13, 28–29, 64–65, 80–81
 cacti 90
 coconuts 171
 forms and shapes 66–67, 68, 70–71
 grasses 126
 imitating other flowers and plants *see* mimicry
 national flowers 176–177
 scents 68, 69, 82–83
 food storage 21, 80, 136, 160
 forest plants 91, 109, 122–123
 rain forest plants 15, 33, 93, 109, 119, 172–173
 see also conifers
 fossil 51, 53
 frangipani 66
 fritillary, spotted 105
 fronds 50, 52–53
 fruits 13, 28, 116, 134–135, 170
 citrus 144–145
 melons 148–149
 soft fruits 138–139
 stone fruits 142–143
 tropical fruits 146–147
 fungal diseases 113
 fungi 12

G

gac 148, 149
 garlic 122, 123, 161
 geranium 36
 germination 20, 21, 22, 25, 28
 ginger 166, 167
 ginkgo 32, 33, 57, 83, 110, 111
 glory lily 176
 glucose 12
 goji berry 138
 golden wattle 176
 gorse 41
 gourd 148, 156, 157
 grain 130–131
 grapevine 139, 140–141
 grasses 10, 126–127, 128–129, 130–131
 grassland plants 91, 127
 groundnut 151
 guava 146, 147
 gymnosperms 11, 46

H

hairs, root 15
 hart's tongue fern 52, 53
 haustoria 103
 hazel 17, 150, 151
 heart leaf fern 53
 heart of palm 160, 161
 helosis 102, 103
 hemiparasites 102–103
 hemlock 100
 hemp 171
 henna 174, 175
 herbs 168–169
 high altitude plants 104–105
 Himalayan blue poppy 176, 177
 Himalayan may apple 105
Historia Plantarum 178
 holly 36, 37, 111
 holoparasites 103
 honeydew melon 148, 149
 honey locust 35
 horned melon 149
 hornwort 10, 47, 84, 85
 horse chestnut 22, 23
 horsetail 47, 49, 54, 87
 Hubbard squash 157
 hummingbirds 68, 69
 hyacinth 81
 hydroponics 149, 178
 Hyperion (world's tallest tree) 114–115

I

Ibn al-Baytar 178
 iceberg rose 75
 India 18–19, 154, 177
 indoors, growing (hydroponics) 149, 178
 inflorescences 66
 Inokashira Park, Japan 72–73
 insects 53, 68–69, 79, 82
 International Space Station (ISS) 180–181
 iris 26, 81, 83

J–K

Jackal food plants 82, 83
 jackfruit 146
 Jamaican tangelo 145
 Japan 72–73, 117, 125, 176
 Japanese painted fern 53

jasmine 106, 176
 jojoba 174, 175
 Juliet rose 75
 juniper 60, 125
 Kajari melon 148, 149
 kale 153
 kauri 60, 61
 kettlwort 48, 49
 kiaat 22
 king protea 67
 kiwi fruit 134
 kohlrabi 160, 161
 Korean melon 149
 kumquat 145

L

laburnum 116
 ladybugs 68, 69
 Lanzarote, Spain 140–141
 larch 58–59, 60–61
 large duck orchid 71
 large-flowered trillium 123
 lateral roots 14, 15
 lavender 174, 175, 177
 leaflets 35
 leaves 13, 14, 21, 30–31, 171
 as defenses 41
 grasses 127
 shapes and sizes of 32–33, 34–35, 86
 vegetables 134, 152
 Lebanon cedar 58, 59
 leek 81, 160
 legume 11
 lemon 145
 lentil 154
 lettuce 152, 153





Leuser Ecosystem 172–173
 lewisia, long-petaled 105
 lichens 12
 life cycles, plants 28–29
 lima bean 155
 lime 145
 lingonberry 138, 139
 Linnaeus, Carl 179
 liverworts 10, 47, 49
 living bridges 18–19
 living stone plant 95
 llareta 94, 95
 lodgepole pine 60, 61
 long strap fern 119
 lotus 177
 lumber 165, 170, 173
 lupine 34
 lychee 147
 lycopods 10

M

magnolia 116, 117
 male fern 50–51, 52
 manchineel 101
 Manchurian striped maple 112, 113
 mandarin orange 144
 mangroves 15, 88–89
 maple 108–109, 110, 111, 176, 177
 leaves 32, 33
 seeds 25
 marigold 22, 23, 86, 87
 materials, from plants 158–159, 165, 170–171
 Maui island-aster 76, 77
 McClintock, Barbara 179
 meat-eating plants 98–99
 medicinal plants 49, 75, 117, 137, 165, 166, 168, 178
 Mediterranean cypress 110
 melon 148–149
 Mendel, Gregor 179
 midribs 31
 milk thistle 25
 milkweed, common 41
 mimicry
 for defense 41, 82–83
 for pollination 69, 70–71, 78, 82–83

miniature trees (bonsai) 124–125
 mint 26, 169
 mistletoe 102
 mock orange 116
 monk's hood cactus 90
 monocots 11, 21
 mosses 10, 46–47, 48–49, 118–119, 122, 123
 mother of thousands 26, 27
 moths 68
 mountain plants 104–105
 mulberry 138
 multicolored (variegated) plants 36–37
 mummification 168
 musical instruments 165, 170
 mustard 167
 Mutusia flower 77

N

naked man orchid 70
 national flowers 176–177
 nectar 64, 65, 69, 98
 nectarine 143
 needles 58–59
 nerine 80, 81
 nitrogen 42–43
 nonflowering plants 10, 46–47
 see also cones; ferns; mosses
 Nordmann fir 110, 111
 Norway maple 108–109
 nuts 150–151

O

oca 137
 oils 75, 170
 olive 142, 143
 onion 81, 160
 orange 144
 orchids 11, 70–71, 78–79, 119
 alpine spotted 104, 105
 cattleya 79, 176–177
 oregano 168, 169
 organ pipe cactus 92, 93
 orthotrichum moss 118, 119
 Orto Botanico di Padova 178
 Outeniqua yellowwood 60
 ovaries 64, 65

P

palms 11, 143
 coconut palm 25, 111, 150, 151, 170–171
 pampas grass 129

papaya 146, 147
 paper 165
 parasitic plants 102–103
 parrot flower 70, 71
 parrot's feather 85
 parsnip 136
 passion flower 41
 passion fruit 146
 patterned plants 36–37, 38–39
 pattypan squash 157
 pea 154–155
 peach 22, 142
 peanut 151
 pear 135
 pecan 151
 pepper 167
 perennial plants 28
 perfume 117, 168, 174
 persimmon 146, 147
 petals 29, 64, 78
 petioles 30
 photosynthesis 12, 31, 181
 pineapple 146
 pine nut 151
 pines 58–59, 60–61, 113
 pink quill 67
 pinna 50
 pistachio 150, 151
 pitcher plant 98, 98–99
 plantlets 27
 plum 117
 pneumatophore roots 15
 poisonous plants 40, 81, 95, 100–101, 143
 pollen 60, 64, 78, 79
 pollination 53, 56, 60, 61, 64
 see also reproduction
 pollinators 64, 66, 68–69, 70–71, 78, 79
 bats 91, 93
 birds 60, 66, 101
 insects 53, 68–69, 79, 82
 pomegranate 22
 pomelo 35, 144
 poppy 22, 28–29, 66, 67
 potato 137
 prickles 41
 prickly pear cactus 92, 93
 primrose 66
 products, from plants 158–159, 165, 170–171
 proteins 42–43, 150, 154
 pulses 154–155
 pumpkin 148, 156, 157, 158–159
 purple loosestrife 87
 pussypaws 96–97

Q

queen of the Andes 28
 queen of the night 91
 Queen Victoria agave 94, 95

R

rachis 51
 radial symmetry 39
 radicchio 152, 153
 rainbow chard 152, 153
 rainbow eucalyptus 113
 rain forest plants 15, 33, 93, 109, 119, 172–173
 rambutan 146, 147
 red hot poker 67
 red powderpuff 66
 redwood 112, 115
 reproduction 13, 26–27
 see also pollination
 resins 113
 resurrection plant 94
 rhizomes 26, 51, 137
 rhubarb 86, 87, 160, 161
 rice 130, 131, 132–133
 ricin 101
 rings (tree) 109
 riverbank plants 86–87
 roots 13, 14–15, 19, 50, 90, 127
 epiphytes and parasites 103, 118–119, 121
 first 20
 underwater 84, 88–89
 vegetables 134, 136
 ropes 170
 rose hips 74, 75
 rose of Sharon 176
 rosemary 168, 169
 roses 11, 17, 74–75



rubber 171
 rubber fig 18–19
 runner bean 154, 155
 runners, stem 26
 rush 127
 rutabaga 136

S

saffron 167
 sage 169
 saguaro cactus 92
 sakura 73



samphire 161
 sandalwood 174
 Santa Claus melon 149
 sap 17
 satsuki azalea 124
 Scalbard Global Seed Bank 179
 scales 56, 57
 scents 82–83
 Schleiden, Matthias Jakob 179
 science, of plants 178–179
 seagrass 127
 sedge 127
 seedless plants 26–27
 seedlings 28
 seeds 20–21, 28, 64, 150, 164
 conifer 57, 60
 fruits 134–135
 shapes 22–23
 spreading of 24–25
 sensitive plant 34, 35
 sepals 78
 shea nut 175
 “short-lived” plants 96–97
 silk floss 112
 silver birch 33
 simple leaves 32–33
 sitka spruce 59
 sloe 143
 snap traps 98
 snowberry 87
 snow pea 155
 soft fruits 138–139
 soft rushes 87

soil 42–43
 sori 51
 soybean 155
 space, plants in 74, 180–181
 Spanish moss 118, 119
Species Plantarum 179
 spices 166–167
 spider plant 27
 spines 41, 91, 92, 95, 112
 spores 46, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53
 sporophyte 47
 spruce 58–59, 60–61
 squash 156–157
 squill 122, 123
 staghorn fern 118, 119
 stalks, edible 160–161
 stamens 64, 67
 star fruit 146, 147
 stems 13, 16–17, 26, 90, 92
 climbers and creepers 106–107
 rhizomes 26, 51, 137
 vegetables 135, 160–161
 stiffia 76, 77
 stigmas 64
 stilt roots 15
 stipes 51
 stomata 30
 stone fruits 142–143
 strangler fig 120–121
 strawberry 26, 27, 134, 139
 sugar 12, 31, 42, 171
 sugarcane 16, 130, 131
 sugar maple 110, 111
 sugar pine 58, 59
 Sumatra, Indonesia 172–173
 sunblest rose 74, 75
 sundew 99
 sunflower 22, 23, 38–39, 77
 sun rose 17
 sweet potato 26, 27
 sweet vernal grass 126–127
 Swiss cheese plant 32, 33
 symmetrical patterns 38–39

T

tamarack larch 59
 tamarinds 34, 35
 taproot 14
 taro plant 136, 137
 tea 40, 41, 137, 169, 177
 tendrils 12, 107
 teosinte 164
 tepary bean plant 155
 Thailand 71, 121
 Theophrastus 178
 thorns 40–41, 95, 106
 Thurber's stemsucker 102, 103

thyme 168
 Tibetan cherry 113
 tiger lily 65
 tigger melon 148, 149
 titan arum 83
 treasure flower 76, 77
 trees 19, 108–109, 110–111
 bark 112–113
 blossoms 72–73, 116–117
 bonsai trees 124–125
 plants growing on 77, 118–119
 tropical fruits 146–147
 Tualatin Pumpkin Regatta, US 158–159
 tubers 27, 137
 tulip 36, 37, 81
 turmeric 166
 twining stems 107

V

vanilla 167
 variegated plants 36–37
 vegetables 134–135, 136–137, 180–181
 bulbs, stems, and stalks 160–161
 greens 152–153
 peas and beans 154–155
 squashes 156–157
 veins 30, 31, 32, 49
 Venus flytraps 98
 Vietnam 132–133
 vines 106–107, 139, 148, 156
 vineyards 140–141
 Virginia creeper 106–107
 Virginia waterleaf 37
 vitamins 75, 134, 138, 144, 156
 volcanic ash 140–141

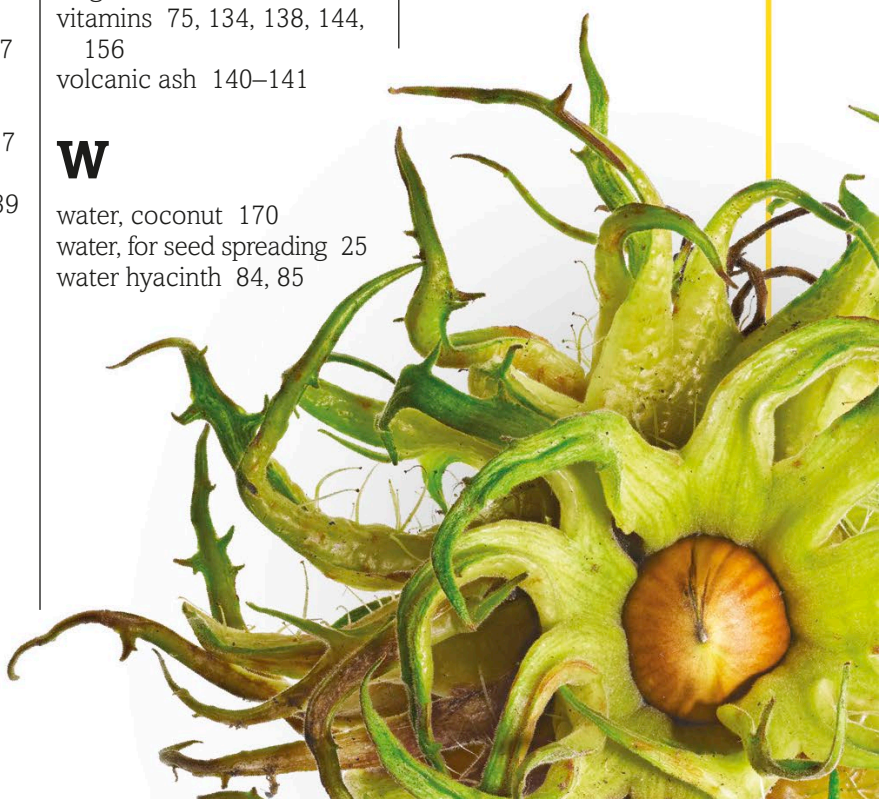
W

water, coconut 170
 water, for seed spreading 25
 water hyacinth 84, 85

water lettuce 85
 water lily 84, 85
 watermelon 148, 149
 water plants 84–85
 water spearmint 87
 water storage 80, 90, 91, 94
 waterweed 85
 waterwheel plant 98
 welwitschia 57
 wheat 130, 131
 White, Gilbert 179
 white baneberry 100, 101
 white egret flower 70, 71
 white poplar 113
 white skunk cabbage 87
 whorl flower 76, 77
 wild berries 138
 wild rose 74
 wind, for seed spreading 25
 winged bean 154, 155
 wisteria 106, 124
 wolfsbane 100, 101
 wood anemone 122, 123

Y–Z

yew 101
 ylang-ylang 174
 Yubari King melon 149
 Zimbabwe 176



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144cl, Juana Maria Gonzalez Santos 175cr, Sarah2 43cra, Antonio Scarpi 155cl, 189tr, Bernd Schmidt 124cla, 125cr, 125cb, Martin Schneider 92cra, Alfio Sciseti 116c, 168crb, 175crb, Eleonora Scordo 37tr, Sally Scott 135bc, 160cl, Anna Sedneva 135tl, 152–153b, Toshihisa Shimoda 86cla, 160c (Cardoon), Alexander Sidiyakov 122cra, Sirfuiyama 70tr, Poravute Siriphiron 10br, Sallison 137cb, Sommai Sommai 145ca, 145cr, Stock Image Factory 174c, Stocksnapper 130c (Oats), Subbotina 147cb, Likit Supasai 148clb, Yodsawaj Suriyasiririn 142c, Swkunst 142tl, Taitai6769 22cr, Taechit Tanantornanutra 118cb (Fern), Maxim Tatarinov 138clb, Wallop Thamsuaydee 6tl, 146cra, 187tr, Threear 30clb, Thungsarnphoto 171cb, Sergii Trofymchuk 28c, Ievgenii Tryfonov 109tr, Twoellis 160br, Valentyn75 7bl, 22ca (Poppy seeds), 147ca, Verastuchelova 84br, 168bc, Gabriel Vergani 131cr, Vitoriaholdingsllc 176cb, Vladvitek 23r, Voevale 33cla, Jürgen Wackenhut 74cl, Yael Weiss 22ca (Magnifying glass), Shane White 43crb, Yutthasart Yanakornisri 170cb (Rope), Ydvayd 138cr, 151ca, Zakri2023 160tr, Dzmitry Zelianeuskii 112cla, Sheng Zhang 139cl (Red bayberry), Zigzagmart 148crb, Сергей Кучугурный 150ca; **flickr.com/photos/laajala/**: 70cl; **Nigel Forsshaw:** 104cla; **GAP Photos:** Jonathan Buckley 105c, Clive Nichols 113cl, Nova Photo Graphik 104cra, Friedrich Strauss 116cr, Visions 99crb; **Garden World Images:** Rita Coates 53tr; **The Garden Collection:** FP / BIOSPHOTO 99clb; **Getty Images:** 500Px Plus / Danny Dunga 72–73, Kazuo Ogawa / Aflo 71tr, AFP / Chaideer Mahyuddin 172–173, Nikolay Doychinov / Afp 75tl, AWL Images / Getty Images Plus / Catherine Unger 94clb, P. 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