

Botany Encyclopedia Article

Botany

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Botany

Botany is the study of plants. Plants make up a large fraction of all living organisms, and the study of botany is equally broad, including the **physiology**, genetics, anatomy, and **morphology** of plants, as well as their taxonomy, evolution, ecological relationships, and the many ways in which plants are used by people.

Like other scientific endeavors, the field of botany has grown immensely during the last decades of the twentieth century. It might also be said to have shrunk, however, as botanists have more carefully defined what a plant is. Fungi, algae, and photosynthetic bacteria, which were once classified as plants, are now placed in other kingdoms. Nonetheless, many who study these organisms still consider themselves botanists, and many university botany departments continue to include these organisms as topics of study within their departments.

Plants have an enormous influence on our lives through their use as foods, fibers, and fuels, as well as their critical role in recycling the gases of the atmosphere. More complete knowledge of botany improves our understanding of these influences, allowing us to use them more effectively, and more wisely.

See Also

Ecology, History Of; Evolution of Plants, History Of; Physiology, History Of.

Bibliography

Raven, Peter H., Ray F. Evert, and Susan E. Eichhorn. *Biology of Plants*, 6th ed. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1999.