

# Radiotracer Encyclopedia Article

## Radiotracer

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A radioactive **isotope** progressing through a biological or physical system can be followed by several tracking procedures. For example, **fertilizer** containing radioactive **phosphorus** can be added to **soil**. Plants grown in this soil then take up the radioactive phosphorus just as they do non-radioactive phosphorus. If one of these plants is placed on a photographic plate, radiation from the radioactive phosphorus exposes the plate. The plant "takes its own picture," showing where the phosphorus concentrates in the plant. Radiotracers are a highly desirable research technique as they do not require the destruction of an organism for its study.