

Al-Mustaqbal University

College of Science

General biology-Botany

Professions Theoretical Lecture 1

Assist. Prof. Dr. Dhurgham Ali Al-Sultany

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**Plant Kingdom**

**Introduction**

The **Plant Kingdom** (*Kingdom Plantae*) is one of the most important biological kingdoms, encompassing a wide variety of organisms that are primarily autotrophic, multicellular, and photosynthetic. Below is a **detailed breakdown** of the plant kingdom, its classification, characteristics, ecological significance, and evolution.

**Key Characteristics of the Plant Kingdom**

1. **Eukaryotic Nature**: Plants are made up of complex cells with a true nucleus and organelles like chloroplasts.
2. **Autotrophic Mode of Nutrition**: Most plants are autotrophic, meaning they produce their own food through photosynthesis, using chlorophyll pigments to convert sunlight, carbon dioxide, and water into glucose and oxygen.
3. **Cell Walls**: Plant cells have a rigid cell wall made of cellulose, providing structural support.
4. **Multicellular**: All plants are multicellular, with cells organized into tissues and organs (roots, stems, leaves, flowers).
5. **Alternation of Generations**: Plants alternate between two phases in their life cycle:

**A- Sporophyte** (diploid): Produces haploid spores through meiosis.

**B- Gametophyte** (haploid): Produces gametes through mitosis.

1. **Non-Motility**: Plants are generally sessile (stationary) and rely on external factors like wind, water, or animals for pollination and seed dispersal.
2. **Storage**: Plants store energy in the form of starch, a complex carbohydrate.

**Detailed Classification of the Plant Kingdom**

Plants are classified based on the presence or absence of vascular tissues, seeds, and flowers. Below is an in-depth classification:

**I. Non-Vascular Plants (Bryophytes)**

1. The simplest and most primitive plants that lack vascular tissues (xylem and phloem).
2. Rely on water for reproduction and nutrient transport.
3. Dominant phase: Gametophyte.

**Subgroups**:

1. **Mosses** (*Phylum Bryophyta*):

Example: *Funaria*.

Grow in dense green clumps; reproduce via spores.

1. **Liverworts** (*Phylum Hepatophyta*):

Example: *Marchantia*.

Flattened, ribbon-like body; found in moist areas.

1. **Hornworts** (*Phylum Anthocerotophyta*):

Example: *Anthoceros*.

Horn-like sporophytes and symbiotic relationships with cyanobacteria.

**Significance:**

1. Pioneers of barren land, aiding soil formation.
2. Provide habitats for microorganisms.

**II. Vascular Plants (Tracheophytes)**

Plants with vascular tissues (xylem and phloem), which allow the efficient transport of water, minerals, and nutrients. Divided into seedless plants and seed plants.

**A. Seedless Vascular Plants (Pteridophytes)**

1. First plants to evolve vascular tissues.
2. Reproduce via spores; lack seeds.
3. Dominant phase: Sporophyte.

**Examples**:

* 1. **Ferns** (*Phylum Pteridophyta*):

Example: *Pteris* (Brake fern).

Have fronds (leaves) and underground stems (rhizomes).

* 1. **Horsetails** (*Phylum Equisetophyta*):

Example: *Equisetum*.

Jointed stems with silica deposits.

* 1. **Club Mosses** (*Phylum Lycopodiophyta*):

Example: *Lycopodium*.

Small plants resembling mosses but with vascular tissues.

**Significance**:

1. Help in soil stabilization.
2. Fossilized forms contribute to coal deposits.

**B. Seed Plants**

Seed plants reproduce through seeds, offering better protection and dispersal mechanisms.

**i. Gymnosperms (Naked Seed Plants)**

1. Seeds are exposed (not enclosed in fruits).
2. Mostly woody trees or shrubs.
3. Adapted to diverse climates, including arid and cold environments.

**Classes**:

1. **Conifers** (*Class Pinopsida*):

Example: *Pinus* (Pine tree).

Needle-like leaves; cones for reproduction.

1. **Cycads** (*Class Cycadopsida*):

Example: *Cycas*.

Palm-like plants with large compound leaves.

1. **Ginkgo** (*Class Ginkgoopsida*):

Example: *Ginkgo biloba*.

Deciduous trees with fan-shaped leaves.

1. **Gnetophytes** (*Class Gnetopsida*):

Example: *Ephedra*.

Varying forms; some are shrubby or vine-like.

**Significance**:

1. Provide timber, resins, and medicinal compounds.
2. Important for ecosystem stability.

**ii. Angiosperms (Flowering Plants)**

1. Most advanced and diverse plant group.
2. Seeds are enclosed within fruits, which aid in protection and dispersal.
3. Reproduce via flowers, often with specialized mechanisms involving pollinators.

**Divisions**:

1. **Monocots**:

Single seed leaf (*cotyledon*).

Parallel leaf venation.

Examples: Grasses, lilies, bamboo.

1. **Dicots**:

Two seed leaves.

Reticulate (net-like) leaf venation.

Examples: Roses, beans, sunflowers.

**Significance**:

1. Provide food (grains, fruits, vegetables).
2. Crucial for agriculture and ecosystems.
3. Include ornamental plants, timber, and medicinal herbs.

**Ecological Importance of Plants**

1. **Primary Producers**: Plants form the base of food chains by converting solar energy into chemical energy.
2. **Oxygen Production**: Photosynthesis releases oxygen, essential for aerobic organisms.
3. **Carbon Sequestration**: Absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide, helping combat climate change.
4. **Habitat Formation**: Plants provide shelter and food for countless organisms.
5. **Nutrient Cycling**: Decomposed plant matter enriches soil with nutrients.

**Economic Importance of Plants**

1. **Agriculture**: Crops provide food, fodder, and raw materials.
2. **Medicinal Uses**: Many modern medicines (e.g., quinine, aspirin) are derived from plants.
3. **Industries**:
   1. Timber for construction and paper production.
   2. Fibers like cotton and jute for textiles.
   3. Oils (e.g., coconut, sunflower) for cooking and industry.
4. **Aesthetic Value**: Ornamental plants beautify urban landscapes and gardens.

**Evolution of the Plant Kingdom**

1. **Origin**: Plants are believed to have evolved from green algae (~500 million years ago).
2. **Adaptations to Land**:
   1. Development of cuticle to prevent water loss.
   2. Evolution of vascular tissues for water and nutrient transport.
   3. Seeds and flowers for reproductive success in terrestrial environments.

**Challenges to the Plant Kingdom**

1. **Deforestation**: Reduces biodiversity and contributes to climate change.
2. **Climate Change**: Alters growth patterns and threatens species.
3. **Pollution**: Harms plant health and productivity.
4. **Invasive Species**: Compete with native plants, disrupting ecosystems.