

GLOSSARY

This glossary includes some words that may be new to you and provides a short description based on the plants included in this book. Many of these words apply to other plants, or animals or living things in general.



ADAPTATION

a feature of a plant that helps it or its offspring survive in its environment

BACTERIA

a living thing made up of a single cell that lacks a middle area called a nucleus

CARNIVOROUS

a plant able to trap and digest small organisms, like insects

CHLOROPLAST

a structure in plant cells where photosynthesis occurs

CULTIVATED

a plant that is grown for a purpose (such as a plant grown as a crop or a garden plant)

DESERT

a very dry area of land that receives very little rainfall; any vegetation is often low growing and sparse

ECOREGION

a way of describing an area of land with a specific combination of weather, soils, plants and animals that make it distinct (such as a desert)

EPICORMIC BUDS

buds found just under the bark of some trees, which can sprout into new leaves or branches to help the tree survive if it is damaged by fire or wind, for example

FAMILY

a group of plants that are broadly similar to each other, usually containing several genera

FERTILISATION

when gametes fuse

GAMETES

eggs and sperm. In flowering plants, eggs are found in the ovary and sperm is found in the pollen. In plants such as ferns, eggs and sperm are produced by the gametophyte

GAMETOPHYTES

in ferns, gametophytes are tiny 'plants' that produce gametes

GENES

information that determines the features of a plant; this information is passed on from the plant's parents to its offspring

GENUS (PLURAL GENERA)

a group of plants that are all quite similar to each other (more similar than those in a family)

HAUSTORIA

a special type of root from one plant which attaches to another plant to tap into its water and nutrient supply

HYBRID

a plant that has grown when the pollen from one species of plant fertilises an egg from another species of plant

HYPERACCUMULATION

the ability of some plants to take up large concentrations of heavy metals and store them in their cells

INFLORESCENCE

a group of flowers growing closely together

LARVA (PLURAL LARVAE)

the 'baby' life stage of an insect

LIGNOTUBER

a woody swelling at the base of some tree trunks that contains buds and food and out of which new trunks can grow if the old trunk is damaged

MONTANE GRASSLAND

a type of vegetation that grows only at high altitudes and is dominated by grass or grass-like plants

MYCORRHIZA

a special relationship between a plant and a fungus

NECTAR

a sweet liquid that is produced in some flowers to attract pollinators (like bees)



NITROGEN

an important nutrient plants need to grow

NODULES

swellings on the roots of some plants, containing bacteria that are able to convert nitrogen into a form that plants can take up

ORGANISM

a living thing able to grow, function and reproduce (plants, animals, fungi and bacteria are all organisms)

PARASITE

a plant that grows on another plant and gets things it needs to grow from the host plant

PETAL

found in flowers, often coloured and can be scented to attract pollinators such as insects

PHOTOSYNTHESIS

a chemical reaction that occurs in the green parts of plants, where nutrients, water, carbon dioxide and light are used to make sugars

PHYLLODE

a leaf stalk that is modified to function (and often look like) a leaf

PHYTOREMEDIATION

using plants to clean up soil or water

PISTIL

the part of a flower where the egg is found

POLLEN

the part of the flower that contains sperm which fuses with an egg in the pistil to form a seed

POLLINATOR

an organism (often an insect) that helps to transfer pollen to the pistil

PROTEOID ROOTS

roots that are clustered close together and help the plant get nutrients out of the soil

RHIZOME

a special type of stem that is able to produce new shoots as well as new roots

SCLEROPHYLL

plants that generally have small, tough leaves which reduce water loss

SEPAL

the outer layer of many flowers, often small, green and leaf-like

SHRUBLAND

an area where the vegetation is mainly shrubs (woody plants that are generally shorter than trees and often multi-stemmed)

STOMA (PLURAL STOMATA)

tiny holes found on the surface of leaves, where gases move in and out of the plant and water is lost

SUBTROPICAL

a zone that generally has hot summers and mild winters

SUCCULENT

a fleshy-looking plant able to hold extra water in its leaves or stems or both

SYMBIOSIS

when two organisms (like a plant and a bacteria) live together and help each other in some way (for example, the plant gives the bacteria sugar and the bacteria gives the plant nutrients)

TAXONOMIST

a scientist whose job is to identify and describe different species

TEMPERATE

a zone that generally has a moderate climate, with minimal extremes in temperatures

TROPICAL

a zone that is generally hot and wet

WEED

a plant growing somewhere it isn't meant to grow or doesn't grow naturally

ZOOPLANKTON

tiny creatures that are so small they are sometimes made up of just one cell

