

SEED BEARING PLANTS

# Flowering plants

Domain	Eukaryota
Kingdom	Plantae
Clade	Angiosperm

140 MYA – PRESENT

Flowering plants, in the clade angiosperm, are among the most diverse and successful organisms ever to evolve. They make up more than 90% of all vascular plants and have an incredible diversity of shapes and sizes.

Angiosperms include grasses, trees, cacti, daisies, roses, rice, wheat, cotton, legumes, fruits, and about 300,000 other species.

## Fossil Record

The oldest fossilised flowers have been found from the early Cretaceous about 125 million years ago in northern China. Fossil pollen likely from angiosperms has been recorded in slightly older rocks. By the late Cretaceous, angiosperms had diversified to such an extent that they began to replace conifers as the dominant forest trees.

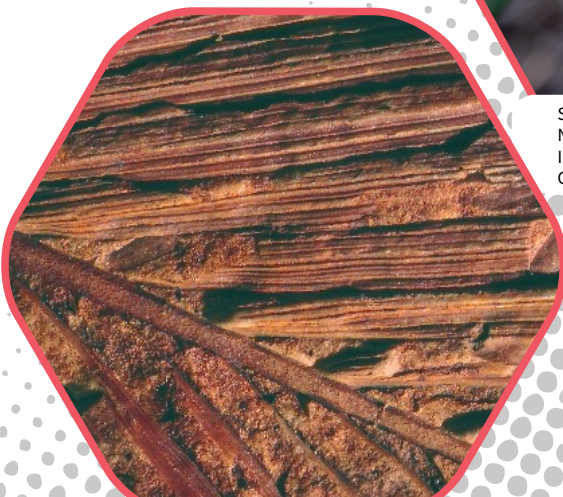
## Habitat and Lifestyle

Angiosperms live in almost all environments. Some live in water, like water lilies, some live in alpine environments where they survive freezing temperatures and high winds, while others like cacti have developed water storage mechanisms for life in arid deserts.

Others, such as mistletoe, are parasitic and live by extracting nutrients from host plants. Flowers contain male pollen grains, which are carried on the stamen and female egg-cells (ova), which are carried in the ovary. When fertilised, the ovary develops into a fruit and the ova into the seeds.



Small native pea in the family Fabiaceae, New South Wales. Image from Dominic Iffland, Geoscience Australia.



Fossil frond of a palm tree, Eocene (about 50 million years old), South Australia. Image from Jim Frazier.

## DID YOU KNOW

There are even some flowering plants that eat insects and other small animals. The venus flytrap has a trap formed at the end of each of the plant's leaves and is triggered by tiny hairs on their inner surfaces. When an insect or spider crawling along the leaves contacts two of these hairs, the trap snaps shut and the animal is captured and is slowly digested by the plant.



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