



SEEDLESS PLANTS

Lycopods

425 MYA – PRESENT

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|---------|----------------|
| Domain | Eukaryota |
| Kingdom | Plantae |
| Phylum | Lycophyta |
| Class | Lycopodiopsida |

Lycopods were some of the earliest vascular plants and their vascular system (xylem and phloem) allowed them to grow much larger than the first land plants which lacked a vascular system. They differ from all other vascular plants by not having true

leaves. Lycopods were among the first plants to grow to the size of modern trees and about 400 million years ago in the Devonian they formed the first major forests.

Fossil Record

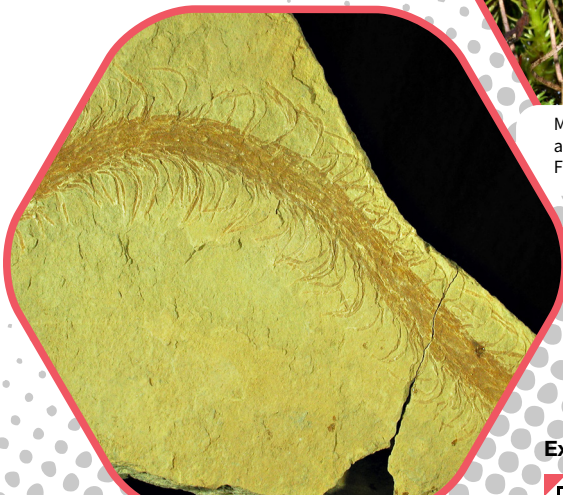
The oldest fossil lycopods are from the Silurian, with some of the best preserved from near Yea, in Victoria. During the Devonian some lycopods reached 35 m in height and had trunks more than 1 m in diameter. Large lycopods died out by the end of the Carboniferous, but their smaller relatives still exist today.

Habitat and Lifestyle

Lycopods, like ferns do not reproduce using seeds, but through spores. Extant (living) lycopods are small, inconspicuous plants which are widespread and commonly found living in the understorey of rainforests.



Modern Lycopods, *Lycopodiella inundata* and *Drosera rotundifolia*. Image from Christian Fischer, Wikimedia Commons.



Lycopod, *Baragwanathia longifolia*, Late Silurian (about 416 million years old), Victoria. Image from Steve McLoughlin, Swedish Museum of Natural History.

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DID YOU KNOW

Huge deposits of plant material can accumulate as peat. This peat can then be buried by sediments and compressed over millions of years to form coal. The industrial revolution was powered by coal formed mostly from peat from the extensive Carboniferous lycopod forests of Europe and North America.

