



Unit 7 How Can Plants Be Classified?

* Glossary

Fodder: food that is given to farm animals

Flavour: to give a particular taste to food or drink

Dye: a substance used to change the colour of something


Uses of plants

People use plants for many purposes. Plants provide us with basic food in the form of carbohydrates and proteins, as well as essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals. Carbohydrates come from cereals (wheat, rice and maize), tubers (potatoes), and roots and proteins from legumes and their pulses (beans, peas and lentils).

Vegetable oils for both food and industrial use come from the crushed or pressed seeds of temperate crops such as rapeseed and linseed. Mediterranean vegetables like sunflowers and olives those from the tropics such as peanuts and palm oil are all used to make various types of oil.

Plants also provide **fodder** for our livestock, including grass for ruminants as they can digest the cellulose in plant cell walls.

We **flavour** our food with herbs and spices and sweeten it with sugar both cane and beet. We make wine from grapes and beer from barley, while tea, coffee and chocolate are popular beverages made from plants.

We clothe ourselves with plant fibres such as cotton, colour cloth with **dyes** like indigo used to dye blue jeans, and use plants for hats, shoes and adornments such as seed necklaces. We are clean and sweet smelling thanks to scented soap made, for example, from palm oil and lavender.

We still rely on plants for medicines. The latex from poppy capsules provides morphine and codeine for pain relief and, for many years, quinine from cinchona bark was the best treatment for malaria.

Plants provide us with fuel, such as wood traditionally burned for heating and cooking. Many musical instruments, sports and games equipment are made from plants. Finally, we find plants beautiful and use them for decorative purposes.

We should, however, never forget that we rely on plants as a whole to capture the sun's energy to make the food we eat and to produce the oxygen we breathe and, perhaps most importantly of all, the photosynthesising organisms that have shaped and still shape the Earth's climate.

(Adapted from: J.E. Bradshaw, *Plant Breeding: Past, Present and Future*, Springer, 2016)





Understanding the text

1. Read the text and find words which mean much the same as the following.

- 1. Grano, frumento:
- 2. Fagioli:
- 3. Semi:
- 4. Girasole:
- 5. Foraggio, mangime:
- 6. Uva:
- 7. Carburante:
- 8. Legno:

Writing

2. Write nine uses of plants mentioned in the text. One has been done as an example.

- 1. **Vegetable oils**
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

3. Choose one of the uses you have listed in the previous exercise and write a paragraph of about 50 words about it. Use the lexicon given.

- Plants such as ... have been extensively used for ...
- For example, ...
- The main advantages/disadvantages are ...



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