

On the UCLA campus, Professor Arthur C. Gibson has since 1984 taught a course on economic botany, entitled "Plants and Civilization." More than 8600 undergraduate students have taken that course (as of 1999), which Prof Gibson has taught 29 times, and likely that course is the largest of its kind at any university, often having enrollments of 300 to 370 students. The textbook for that course has been a manual written and privately published by Prof Gibson that includes writeups on economically important plants and basic lessons on plant structure.

You are invited to read these "fun" essays on plants, to thereby appreciate roles that plants played in the history of civilization and perform in our society today. The files for these writeups and images will be posted here gradually, so that some of the topics are not currently online. Visit this site to read the new files that have been posted.

Writeups and illustrations of economically important plants

1. [Algae](#)
2. Allspice ([Pimento](#))
3. Amaranth ([Amaranthus](#)) and quinoa ([Chenopodium](#))
4. Apple ([Pyrus](#)) and other pomes
5. Avocado ([Persea](#))
6. [Bamboo](#)
7. Banana and plantain ([Musa](#))
8. Belladonna ([Atropa](#))
9. Black pepper ([Piper](#))
10. [Blood poisons](#)
11. Breadfruit ([Artocarpus](#))
12. Cacao ([Theobroma](#))
13. Carnauba wax ([Copernicia](#))
14. Carob ([Ceratonia](#))
15. Cassava, manioc, or yuca root ([Manihot](#))
16. [Cereals](#) (general)
17. Chaulmoogra ([Hydnocarpus](#))
18. Cherries, peaches, and related drupes ([Prunus](#))
19. Chili peppers ([Capsicum](#))
20. Cinnamon ([Cinnamomum](#))
21. Citrus ([Citrus](#))
22. Cloves ([Syzygium](#))
23. Coca and cocaine ([Erythroxylum](#))
24. [Cochineal](#)
25. Coconut ([Cocos](#))
26. Coffee ([Coffea](#))

27. Cole crops, incl. broccoli (*Brassica*)
28. Cork (*Quercus*)
29. Cotton (*Gossypium*)
30. Cranberry (*Vaccinium*)
31. Cucurbits (*Cucurbita* and related genera)
32. [Culinary herbs](#)
33. [Curare](#)
34. Date (*Phoenix*)
35. [Doctrine of signatures](#)
36. Ergot (*Claviceps*)
37. Fig (*Ficus*)
38. Foxglove and digitalis (*Digitalis*)
39. Giant reed or reed cane (*Arundo*)
40. Ginger (*Zingiber*)
41. [Insecticides](#)
42. Irish potato or white potato (*Solanum*)
43. Jicama (*Pachyrhizus*)
44. Jojoba (*Simmondsia*)
45. Kapok (*Ceiba*)
46. Khat (*Catha*)
47. Kiwifruit (*Actinidia*)
48. Kolanut (*Cola*)
49. [Legumes](#) (general)
50. Madagascar periwinkle and VLB (*Catharanthus*)
51. Ma huang (*Ephedra*)
52. Maize or corn (*Zea*)
53. Mango (*Mangifera*)
54. Marijuana (*Cannabis*)
55. Mordant dyes
56. [Mushrooms](#)
57. [Natural rubber](#) (*Hevea* and *Parthenium*)
58. Nutmeg and mace (*Myristica*)
59. Nutmeg hallucinogens (*Virola*)
60. Olive (*Olea*)
61. Onion and garlic (*Allium*)
62. Opium poppy (*Papaver*)
63. Pacific yew and taxol (*Taxus*)
64. Papaya (*Carica*)
65. [Papermaking](#)
66. Peanut (*Arachis*)

67. Peyote and mescaline ([Lophophora](#))
68. Pineapple ([Ananas](#))
69. [Plants and medicine](#)
70. Psillium ([Plantago](#))
71. Psychoactive compounds and nerves ([general](#))
72. Quinine ([Cinchona](#))
73. Raspberries and Blackberries ([Rubus](#))
74. Rauwolfia ([Rauwolfia](#))
75. Rice ([Oryza](#))
76. Soft and hard fibers ([cordage](#))
77. Soybean ([Glycine](#))
78. Strawberry ([Fragaria](#))
79. Sugar cane ([Saccharum](#))
80. Sugar maple ([Acer](#))
81. Sunflower ([Helianthus](#)) and safflower ([Carthamus](#))
82. Sweet potato or kumara ([Ipomoea](#))
83. Taro and dasheen ([Colocasia](#))
84. Tea ([Camellia](#))
85. Tobacco ([Nicotiana](#))
86. Tomatoes ([Lycopersicon](#)) and eggplant ([Solanum](#))
87. Vanilla ([Vanilla](#))
88. Wheat ([Triticum](#))
89. Willow ([Salix](#))
90. Woad ([Isatis](#)) and indigo ([Indigofera](#))
91. [Wood](#) and wood characteristics
92. Yams, edible ([Dioscorea](#))
93. Yams, medicinal ([Dioscorea](#)), cortisone, and steroids
94. Yerba mate ([Ilex](#))

[\[Botany Textbooks\]](#)