

RESOURCES

Plants' Family Tree

Does a rose still smell as sweet if we call it a nonlactiferous shrub with racemose inflorescences and intrapetiolar stipules? That wasn't what Shakespeare had in mind, of course, but plant biologists who need such precise technical descriptions can find them at the Angiosperm Phylogeny Web site from the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. This taxonomic synopsis provides key physical and biochemical characteristics for hundreds of families and genera and all of the 80-odd orders of angiosperms, the flowering plants. Author Peter Stevens packed the site with an enormous amount of information. Along with an evolutionary tree, he includes wise words about the systematics and classification history of the groups. To untangle those knotty problems in nomenclature, a complete listing of families and orders tells you which names are in and which are out.

www.mobot.org/MOBOT/Research/APweb/welcome.html



DATABASE

Checking Cellular IDs

The immune system uses more than 200 genes to mark the body's own cells and identify invading pathogens. Mutations in this block of genes, known as the major histocompatibility complex (MHC), can spark autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis. To help researchers clarify how DNA differences lead to illness, the MHC Haplotype Consortium plans to post sequences for some of the most common varieties of MHC genes, which all lie on chromosome 6. Hosted by the U.K.'s Sanger Institute, the site will eventually hold sequences for MHC haplotypes, or configurations of genes, from a racially diverse group of eight people who have DNA combinations that are linked to autoimmune diseases. The first two sequences have already been posted, and the other six will go up as they become available.

www.sanger.ac.uk/HGP/Chr6/MHC



IMAGES

Solar System Spectacular

Defying its reputation as the gloomy planet, Saturn looks almost cheery as its southern hemisphere begins a 7-year-long summer (above), when temperatures will soar to a torrid -180 degrees Celsius. NASA's Planetary Photojournal[†] provides a slew of snapshots showing the nine planets, along with local asteroids and comets. You can select from recent images by the Hubble Space Telescope and Cassini orbiter, for example, or classic portraits by the Voyager and Mariner spacecraft. Every picture carries an in-depth caption that clearly explains what you're seeing.

For down-to-earth imagery, visit this collection[†] from the MISR project, which uses a bank of nine cameras mounted on the Terra satellite to monitor atmospheric and surface conditions on our planet. The site regularly posts timely shots of earthly events, such as dust streaming down the canyons of Southern California, driven by the Santa Ana winds, or smoke clouds from the ferocious fires that encircled Sydney, Australia, last December.

photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov

[†] www-misr.jpl.nasa.gov/gallery/gallery.html

EXHIBITS

Peddling Health

Doctors flack their services on TV. Pharmaceutical companies pitch prescription allergy and heart disease remedies directly to consumers. Ads for herbal supplements promise near-miraculous results. The Medicine and Madison Avenue Web site aims to kindle a discussion of the ethics of such modern advertising by documenting the roots and evolution of the "health sell."

Hosted by Duke University, this exhibit on the early history of health-related advertising showcases more than 600 vintage magazine and newspaper ads from 1911 to 1960. Some of the ads are disturbing because of racial stereotypes, but some are unintentionally hilarious. Phillips' Milk of Magnesia antacid offers a cure for this unappetizing scenario: "He ate a whale of a dinner—then smoked incessantly all night." Others evoke almost-forgotten health threats such as malaria and diphtheria.

Helpful background information calls attention to some of the trends in content and style. For example, the Cold War saw an explosion of "fear ads" that played on consumers' concerns and insecurities. You can also read documents from one of the first cases against a manufacturer, when the Federal Trade Commission sued the maker of Fleischmann's yeast in 1931 for buying endorsements.

scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/mma



CREDITS: (TOP TO BOTTOM) CORBIS; NASA AND THE HUBBLE HERITAGE TEAM (STSC/SLUR); DUKE UNIVERSITY; RARE BOOK, MANUSCRIPT, AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY

Downloaded from www.sciencemag.org on November 23, 2009