

Preface

Since my introduction to plant anatomy by William Strickland at the University of Richmond and my interaction with Arthur Eames and Harlan Banks at Cornell University during graduate study, I have been entranced by the elegant beauty of plant structure. At the University of Michigan I taught both paleobotany and plant anatomy for many years, and served as committee chair for graduate students, some of whom studied fossil plants and others of whom worked on the structure and development of extant taxa. During the past several decades during which the introduction of new techniques of study at the subcellular and molecular levels has resulted in a resurgence of research throughout the world, my interest in the development of plant structure has grown steadily.

Many books on plant structure, some highly technical, have appeared since the publication of the seminal textbooks of Katherine Esau during the 1950s and 1960s, but no single book that, in my opinion, incorporates both the basic knowledge of plant anatomy and contemporary information and ideas about the development of structure and form that could be used as an effective introductory textbook. Consequently, I have tried to meet the challenge of preparing such a book. In each chapter I have presented what I consider to be the fundamental knowledge essential for an understanding of basic plant structure and development and have integrated with this the results of some of the most significant recent research on plant development. Whereas emphasis throughout the book is on structure and development, I have also included sections on evolution and function where it seemed essential and appropriate to do so. The application of cellular and molecular biological approaches and techniques in the study of plant development has revolutionized the field. Understanding of the integrative significance of plasmodesmata and the concept of the symplast have led to an appreciation and widespread acceptance of the organismal theory of plant multicellularity which in turn has influenced research on plant development. Exciting and significant areas of research such as the role of the cytoskeleton in development, signal transduction, genetic control of development, among others have greatly advanced our understanding. I have not treated the very important subject of the genetic control of development in any depth because it requires a much deeper knowledge of genetics than the undergraduate for which this book is written is likely to have attained. I have, however, included references to important genetic studies in the bibliographies of several chapters. Other subjects may not be as fully covered as some teachers and researchers would desire, but they are very likely to find pertinent references to literature on those subjects in the extensive bibliographies to which they can direct their students who have the necessary backgrounds.

Diverging from the approach in many textbooks, I have included in this book tentative conclusions that are essentially still hypotheses, and discussions of research that is controversial, often providing opposing viewpoints. I believe that, in addition to providing well-established information on a subject, a textbook should also provide the student with an understanding of the nature of ongoing scientific research.

In order to make this book more readable for the undergraduate, I have omitted most literature citations in sections of the text in which the basic, widely accepted knowledge in the field is presented, but have included some references of historical importance in the references at the end of each chapter. On the other hand, when presenting new information, ideas, and conclusions that are not yet widely accepted, I have cited in the text and included in the references the sources of this information. Thus, students as well as researchers who wish to consult the original papers may find the reference sections useful.

My objective has been to prepare a new plant anatomy textbook for a new century, incorporating the best research in the most active and significant areas with the widely accepted common knowledge that provides the foundation of the field. Only you the readers can decide if I have succeeded.

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