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THE WORLD

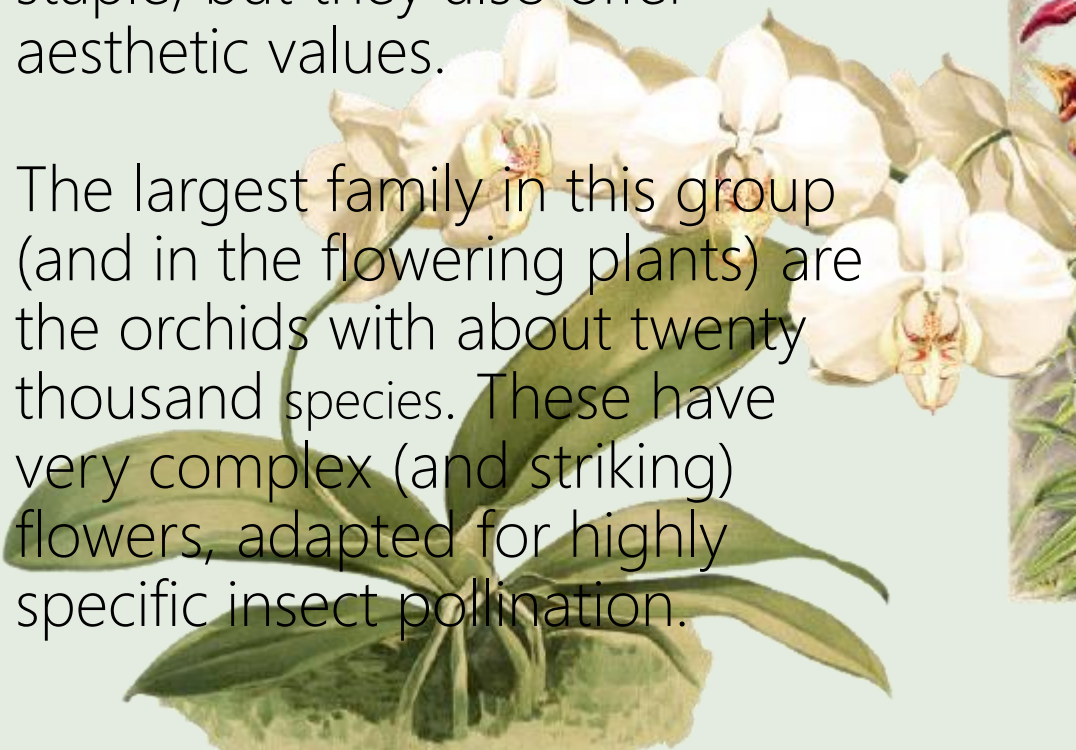
MONOCOTS

Monocots (c. 25% of flowering plants) number some 60000 species, of which > 25000 and > 11000 are orchids (Orchidaceae) and grasses (Panaceass), respectively, the latter group being of huge economic importance as the source of many of the major crops for human and animal food.

In agriculture the majority of the biomass produced comes from monocotyledons. These include not only major grains (rice, wheat, maize, etc.), but also forage grasses, sugar cane, and the bamboos.

Monocots dominate great parts of the earth and comprise the majority of agricultural plants in terms of biomass produced. There are between 50,000 and 60,000 species within this group. Not only are monocots important ecologically, commercially, and as a food staple, but they also offer aesthetic values.

The largest family in this group (and in the flowering plants) are the orchids with about twenty thousand species. These have very complex (and striking) flowers, adapted for highly specific insect pollination.



Every year, in Minsk, the Central Botanical Gardens of the National Academy of Sciences hosts exhibitions of orchids.

The garden's greenhouse of tropical and subtropical plants presents a unique collection of about 100 species of the orchid family.

Part of the collection was brought from the Netherlands, some was cultivated locally. Several wild plants were brought in last year from Vietnam and Laos thanks to a cooperation agreement between the governments of these countries and Belarus and Russia.



From **monocotyledonous** plants man produces the most important foodstuffs, namely bread (wheat, rye, barley), rice, oats and other cereals. Corn, onions, garlic, fruits of coconut and date palms and other plants are also used as food. Ornamental plants include the lily, tulip, hyacinth, narcissus, gladiolus and orchid. Many plants are used as fodder for livestock (oats, timothy, etc.). Bamboo is a building material. In addition, some monocotyledons are vicious weeds.



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