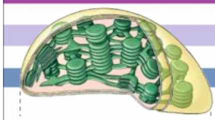


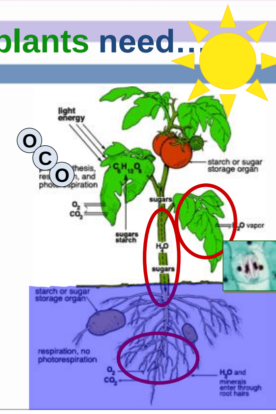
C4 and CAM Photosynthesis

Variations on the Theme

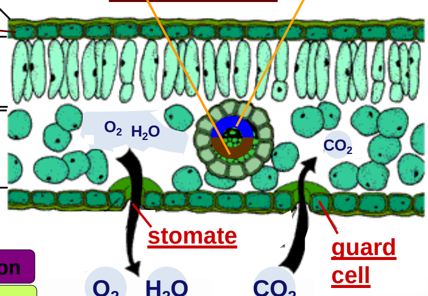
Remember what plants need…

- **Photosynthesis**
  - **light reactions**
    - **light** ← **sun**
    - **H_2O** ← **ground**
  - **Calvin cycle**
    - **CO_2** ← **air**

What structures have plants evolved to supply these needs?



Leaf Structure



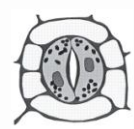
Transpiration

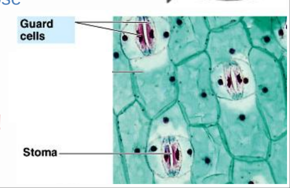
Gas exchange

Controlling water loss from leaves

- Hot or dry days
  - stomates close to conserve water
  - guard cells
    - gain H_2O = stomates open
    - lose H_2O = stomates close
  - adaptation to living on land, but…

    creates PROBLEMS!

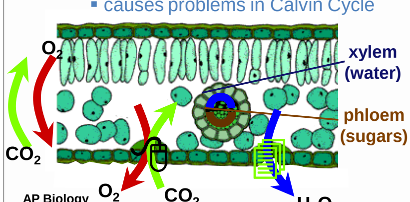




AP Biology

When stomates close…

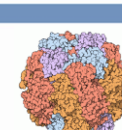
- Closed stomates lead to…
  - O_2 build up → from light reactions
  - CO_2 is depleted → in Calvin cycle
    - causes problems in Calvin Cycle



AP Biology

Inefficiency of RuBisCo: CO_2 vs O_2

- RuBisCo in Calvin cycle
  - carbon fixation enzyme
    - normally bonds C to RuBP
    - CO_2 is the optimal substrate
    - reduction of RuBP
    - building sugars
  - when O_2 concentration is high
    - RuBisCo bonds O to RuBP
    - O_2 is a competitive substrate
    - oxidation of RuBP
    - breakdown sugars

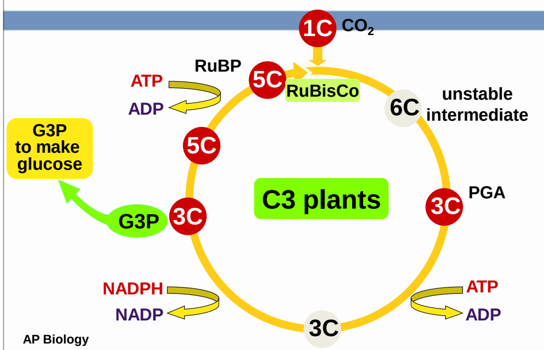


photosynthesis

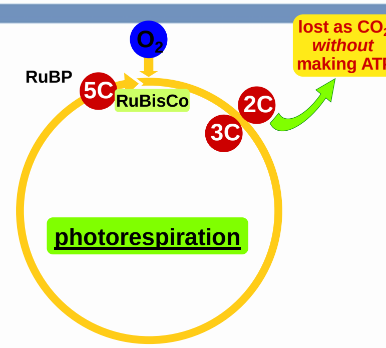
photorespiration

AP Biology

Calvin cycle when CO_2 is abundant



Calvin cycle when O_2 is high



Impact of Photorespiration

- Oxidation of RuBP
  - short circuit of Calvin cycle
  - loss of carbons to CO_2
    - can lose 50% of carbons fixed by Calvin cycle
  - reduces production of photosynthesis
    - no $C_6H_{12}O_6$ (food) produced
  - if photorespiration could be reduced, plant would become 50% more efficient
    - strong selection pressure to evolve alternative carbon fixation systems

Reducing photorespiration

- Separate carbon fixation from Calvin cycle

- C4 plants
  - PHYSICALLY separate carbon fixation from Calvin cycle
    - different cells to fix carbon vs. where Calvin cycle occurs
    - store carbon in 4C compounds
  - different enzyme to capture CO_2 (fix carbon)
    - PEP carboxylase
  - different leaf structure

- CAM plants
  - separate carbon fixation from Calvin cycle by TIME OF DAY
  - fix carbon during night
    - store carbon in 4C compounds
  - perform Calvin cycle during day

C4 plants

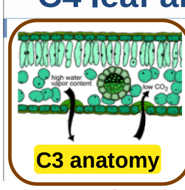
- A better way to capture CO_2
  - 1st step before Calvin cycle, fix carbon with enzyme PEP carboxylase
    - store as 4C compound
  - adaptation to hot, dry climates
    - have to close stomates a lot
    - different leaf anatomy
  - sugar cane, corn, other grasses…

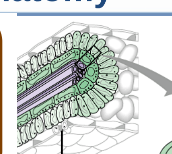
corn

sugar cane

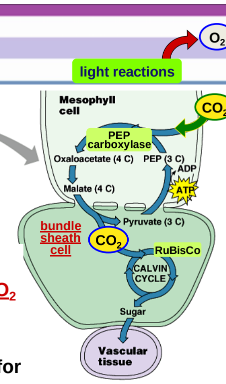
PEP (3C) + $CO_2 \rightarrow$ oxaloacetate (4C)

C4 leaf anatomy





stomate

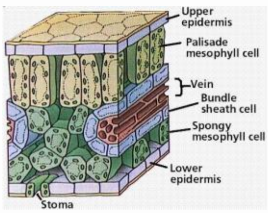


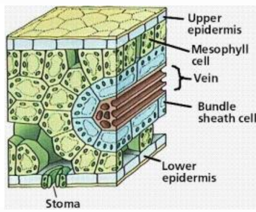
C4 anatomy

- PEP carboxylase enzyme
  - higher attraction for CO_2 than O_2
    - better than RuBisCo
  - fixes CO_2 in 4C compounds
  - regenerates CO_2 in inner cells for RuBisCo

Comparative anatomy

C3 **C4**





PHYSICALLY separate C fixation from Calvin cycle

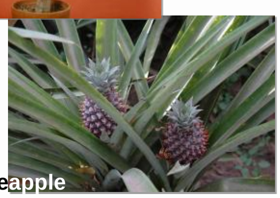
CAM (Crassulacean Acid Metabolism) plants

- **Adaptation to hot, dry climates**
  - **separate carbon fixation from Calvin cycle by TIME**
    - **close stomates during day**
    - **open stomates during night**
  - **at night: open stomates & fix carbon in 4C "storage" compounds**
  - **in day: release CO_2 from 4C acids to Calvin cycle**
    - **increases concentration of CO_2 in cells**
  - **succulents, some cacti, pineapple**

CAM plants

cacti

succulents

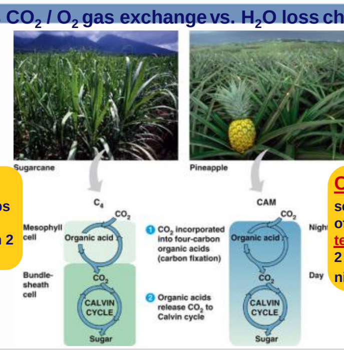


pineapple

C4 vs CAM Summary

solves CO_2 / O_2 gas exchange vs. H_2O loss challenge

C4 plants
separate 2 steps of C fixation **anatomically** in 2 different cells



CAM plants
separate 2 steps of C fixation **temporally** = 2 different times night vs. day

Why the C3 problem?

- Possibly evolutionary baggage
  - Rubisco evolved in high CO_2 atmosphere
    - there wasn't strong selection against active site of Rubisco accepting both CO_2 & O_2
- Today it makes a difference
  - 21% O_2 vs. 0.03% CO_2
  - photorespiration can drain away 50% of carbon fixed by Calvin cycle on a hot, dry day
  - strong selection pressure to evolve better way to fix carbon & minimize photorespiration