MOSS

Mystery File Question

Is moss a plant?

Mystery ? File

It's a myth that moss only grows on the north side of trees. Moss will grow on any side that has enough water.

A Living Carpet

Have you ever seen what looks like a soft carpet of green growing on a tree trunk? It's moss— a small living thing made of many cells. Moss doesn't just grow on trees. It also grows in soil and on rocks.

If you look closely at moss, you'll see thin, stringy stems covered with tiny leaves. If you were to dig one up, you'd discover that moss doesn't have roots. Instead, tiny threads called *rhizoids* (RY-zoids) hold it in place. Unlike roots, rhizoids don't take in water and nutrients. Moss gets water and nutrients through its tiny leaves. It uses water, carbon dioxide in air, and sunlight to make food through photosynthesis.

Moss may look soft and small, but it's powerful! It can even break up rocks. Moss grows in small holes and cracks in rocks. It holds water and expands when that water freezes. As it expands, the cracks in the rock get bigger. Over time, the cracks get so big that the rock breaks apart.

wowser!

A moss leaf is just one cell thick! Each cell is surrounded by a cell wall that helps keep the leaf from drying out.
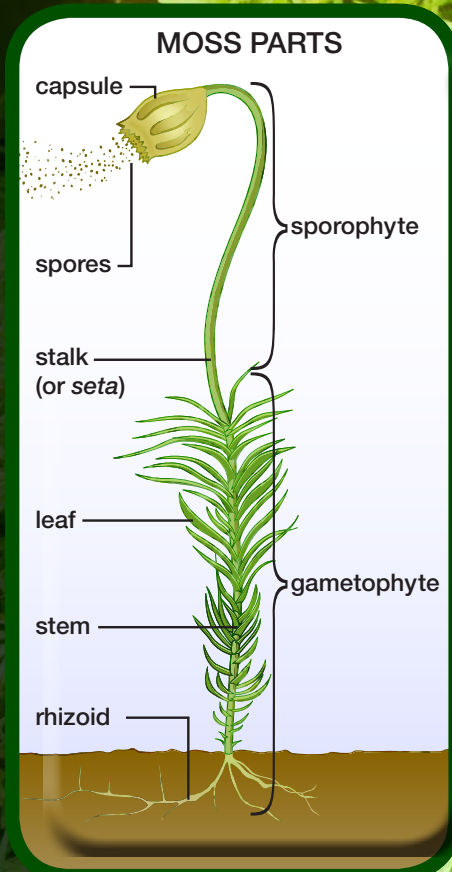
MAKING MORE MOSS

Mosses don't make flowers or seeds. So how do they reproduce?

An individual moss is either male or female. Both are made of many kinds of cells. Some of these cells help the moss grow and develop. Other kinds of cells help it reproduce.

A male moss makes special cells to reproduce. Water carries these cells to a female moss. Then the female grows a tall stalk. A capsule at the end of the stalk stores thousands of small cells called *spores*. After the moss releases the spores, the wind carries them away. If they land in a good location, new moss grows.

MOSS PARTS

- capsule
- spores
- stalk (or *seta*) — sporophyte
- leaf
- stem — gametophyte
- rhizoid

Do You Know?

Sphagnum (SFAG-num) moss was used as a bandage for wounds during the Civil War and World War I.

Mystery File Response Sheet

Key Question: *What do all plants have in common?*

List the details you found in every *I.File* that your team read. Use the **I.Team Evidence** section of your *I.File Response Sheet*.

_____ T F ?

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Now decide whether each of the details you listed is also true for the *Mystery File*. Circle one answer for each detail: **T** = true   **F** = false   **?** = not sure

Did you circle **T** (true) for all the details?   **Yes   No**

Mystery File Question: Is moss a plant?   **Yes   No**

Use evidence to answer the Mystery File Question. Write in complete sentences.

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Plant Life ▶ Properties of Plants ▶ Mystery File
Moss