



GREEN WONDER: A PHILOSOPHY OF THE HIDDEN LANGUAGE OF PLANTS

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ABSTRACT

There are fundamental differences in communication between plants and humans. Plant language makes use of chemical signals, electrical impulses, and other non-verbal cues, whereas human language is based on symbols and spoken words. With its intricate syntax and semantics, human language can communicate over great distances. Plant communication, on the other hand, uses more basic signals that are frequently localized within the plant. This does not imply that plant communication is less complex, though. Decentralized communication between various parts is facilitated by complex networks in plant language. It differs from human language, which is primarily used for explicit communication with others, in that it places more emphasis on internal regulation and response to the environment. Anthropomorphism is a major barrier to understanding plant communication. This is the propensity to give plants human characteristics. Rather, we ought to see plant communication as a distinct mode of expression. It's a language of silence, where the plant speaks through its own growth. A plant's growth pattern becomes its essence, its identity. Plants thrive through a process of "becoming," an ineffable natural fulfillment of their existence that cannot be expressed in words or syntax used by humans.

This paper suggests a paradigm change in our approach. It makes the case for recognizing that plant communication is incomprehensible and transcending the bounds of human language.

The study uses a purely qualitative methodology to investigate this theory.

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INTRODUCTION

From ancient times, plants have been essential to maintaining life on Earth. They came from aquatic life and eventually took over the whole planet. Over time, a world of bushes, trees, and flowers has developed, mingled with human life, and taken on a vital role in our surroundings. Plant growth has altered natural and geochemical processes as well as the terrestrial environment. In addition to offering numerous advantages like food for humans and animals, oxygen, and both traditional and modern medicine, plants also aid in lowering carbon dioxide levels. They also aid in the formation of new species and maintain the equilibrium of ecosystems. Gagliano (2013).

These plants have been our lifelong friends, offering the first indications of universal relationships and exchanges in the field of life. According to Irigaray (2016), the environment found in plants is the oldest that humans have ever encountered. It is a reflection of our primordial existence and is intimately related to the discovery and evolution of life. In the natural world, our interactions and relationships with plants are pre-reflective. They are here in front of us, engaging with us directly and without the need for reflection or analysis. (Irigaray 2016).

Interestingly, though, plants have not received much attention in philosophical discourse, despite their obvious importance in supporting life and ecosystems. Their research is frequently limited to the fields of botany and biology. But philosophy crosses all disciplinary boundaries by definition, including the natural sciences. Investigating the nature of plants and their intricate relationship with humans requires a philosophical perspective.

But the challenge is difficult because plant life has been marginalized and human-centered thinking has become more and more prevalent, particularly with the rise of animal rights activists. Because of the increasing urbanization, biodiversity loss, continued devastation of the environment, and decline in botany education, the study of vegetation has received little attention. Many times, the classification and study of plants are done purely for practical reasons. (Gagliano, 2013).

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The adoption of sustainable environmental practices, as well as the preservation and protection of our environment while also acknowledging our responsibilities towards nature, have become increasingly important in recent times. Acknowledging plants as vital components of the ecosystem, for which we bear responsibility, is imperative. Understanding our relationship with plants is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. This involves using philosophy to delve into the essence of the communication that plants have inherently.

Significance of the Study

The study of plant communication in philosophy is significant because it challenges our preconceived notions of the natural world and its boundaries. By analyzing the ways in which plants interact with their environment and with each other, this study demonstrates that they are not only passive objects but rather active participants in it. This challenges the widely held notion that humans are the only animals capable of consciousness and intelligence by implying that plants may be able to communicate in complex ways and even be intelligent. Furthermore, studying plant communication can reveal new information about the origins of life on Earth as well as the relationships and interactions between all living things.

Literature Review

A survey of the literature illuminates our previous experiences with plants. According to traditional indigenous knowledge, plants are sacred and essential for survival, spiritual activities, and medical use. Many aboriginal cultures believed that plants were spiritual beings given by the Creator, and that their uses were dictated by ancient traditions and teachings (Cajete, 2000). For example, in many cultures, plants were used for medicinal purposes as well as in ceremonies to honor the spirits and create a connection with nature (Duran & Duran, 1995). Many indigenous cultures use sustainable harvesting methods, which recognize the value of plants in their use and harvesting, to preserve the long-term health of the land and the plants (Hill, 2002).

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In Book II, Chapter 3 of *De Anima*, Aristotle discusses plants' nature and place in the natural world. According to Aristotle, plants are "incomplete" animals. He argues that they are not fully alive in the same sense as animals because they are not able to move or feel. This is a fundamental difference between plants and animals because, in Aristotle's view, plants have very different kinds of lives. Aristotle believed that plants possessed a "nutritive soul" that provided them with growth and nourishment. The animal soul, which is able to move and sense things, is not the same as this soul. Plants look for food and water because they have an innate desire to grow and develop. This growth isn't directed toward a single goal, unlike how animals gravitate toward food or other objects. There is no sense or perception in a plant. They are not like animals in that they cannot sense their surroundings or respond to stimuli in the same way. They only move in response to their own needs for sustenance; they do not avoid or seek out anything. Aristotle's more expansive views of nature are reflected in the fundamental differences between plants and animals.

But when it comes to the creation of plants, the medieval philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas argues in *Summa Theologica* (I, Q. 69, Art. 2) that while plants exhibit a basic level of life, it is less complex than that of animals. Plants cannot sense their surroundings because they are immobile. Because the essential functions of plants are subtle, the biblical story focuses on the generation of plants rather than specifically mentioning their life. More complex living organisms emerge as a precursor to the existence of plants.

Furthermore, modern philosopher Morton explores the relationship between humans and plants in his book *"Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology"* (2012), arguing that plants are a part of a complex web of interconnectedness that includes humans. The inner workings and evolutionary background of plants are still unknown, he continued. Plants are more than just objects to be used or exploited; they have agency and existence of their own.

In his writings, French philosopher Deleuze does discuss plants. In their book *"What is Philosophy?"* (1994), Deleuze and his coauthor Félix Guattari explore the concept of

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"becoming" and its relationship to plants. They contend that plants serve as model organisms for becoming because they are ever-growing, ever-adapting, and ever-changing without having fixed essences or identities. Moreover, plants are dynamic entities that undergo constant folding and unfolding; they are not immobile entities possessing fixed attributes. They argue that this becoming process—which is demonstrated by the ways in which plants grow, adapt to their environment, and respond to stimuli—is a necessary component of life.

And lastly, contemporary writer Moore (2000) emphasizes that plants are not just solitary creatures but rather part of a larger ecosystem that both shapes and is shaped by its environment. He dispels the myth that plants are mindless, passive beings by talking about how amazing it is for them to be able to adapt, communicate, and even learn. It is important to recognize and appreciate the unique intelligence that plants have to offer. Understanding our responsibility to other living things is essential because our relationship with plants can promote spiritual growth, wonder, and awe.

The above brief review of the literature highlights a few noteworthy works on philosophical perspectives on the study of plants throughout history.

Statement of the Problem

This essay makes the case that plants have a unique communication system that is analogous to their existence and evolution. Human language is unable to understand this type of communication because it is based on verbal and syntactical structures that are not present in plant language. To understand plants and build a healthy relationship with them, we must recognize that part of their language is incomprehensible. Rather than trying to translate the language of plants into human language, what is needed is a change in philosophical thinking and mindset. Our ethical responsibility to plants and the ecosystem as a whole is based on our understanding of their unique language.

The study specifically responds to the following questions:

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1. First and foremost, what are the scientific justifications for the possibility of plant language?
 2. How is plant language viewed in philosophies of Marder and Irigaray?
 3. What does Marder and Irigaray say is our rightful place in relation to plants?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research investigates the idea of plant communication by examining the writings of two well-known philosophers, Marder and Irigaray. It looks at how they perceive plants to be sentient and how they might be able to communicate in ways that go beyond language. The goal of this research is not to offer conclusive scientific proof that plants can communicate. Furthermore, it skips over the subtleties of language syntax specific to plants. The goal is to increase the understanding of this concept by focusing on the philosophical investigation of plant communication.

METHODOLOGY

The study, which is entirely qualitative, mainly depends on a thorough analysis of a few chosen sources, such as books, journals, and other hardcopy or electronic publications. In order to formulate conclusions based on the findings, content analysis is carried out by closely examining and synthesizing the arguments and insights offered by the authors. After reviewing relevant literature, the study's problem and specific questions were identified by looking at how philosophers have historically viewed plants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to establish a genuine connection with plants, it is imperative to learn their language and ascertain whether they are capable of communication. You can use scientific

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facts as a resource to learn more about this topic. Studies on the characteristics of plants, in particular their ability to communicate and their sensitivity, have been carried out using scientific algorithms. Karban (2015) acknowledges that there is a chance for plant communication, but that the lack of sensory systems limits how effective it can be. His findings are in line with previous research by Aristotle, who claimed that plants lacked a sensory system, and Aquinas, who discovered that plants were not able to perceive their environment. However, Nansen's (2013) research suggests that plants use chemical signals and physical reactions to communicate. They release volatile compounds as a warning and a means of self-defense when they feel threatened. Nansen uses techniques like leaf reflectance and remote sensing to locate communication signals. The work of Dicke et al. (1989), who assert that plants use volatile compounds—chemical signals—as a means of signal transmission, lends support to the study.

A different investigation carried out by the scientist Rhodes (2017) clarifies that plants are able to communicate with their surroundings by means of volatile organic compounds. When plants are attacked by pests, they release compounds that either attract or repel the pests. These compounds can spread through the air or soil networks. Known as the "language of plants," these volatiles cause recipient organisms to respond in a transcriptomic, metabolomic, and behavioral manner.

Additional research by Baluska (2017) indicates that plants use voltage-based signaling systems and electrical impulses to communicate, much like animal nervous systems do. But since plants don't have brains or neurons, it's hard to characterize what makes them special. Baluska goes on to say that although the evidence for plant communication is mounting, plant scientists remain skeptical of its biological significance. Although research in the lab has demonstrated the usefulness of volatiles in communication, there is still insufficient evidence to support their use in real-world scenarios. Baluska's results run counter to Moore's previous reviews of the literature, wherein he argued that plants are sentient, thinking entities. They actively communicate and adapt to their environment.

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Mancuso et al. (2015) concentrate on how plant responses are decentralized and distributed. Regarding plant intelligence and communication, they argue that rather than actively "communicating" in the sense that animals do, plants may instead be responding to their surroundings and the signals of other living things. Mancuso et al.'s work bears some resemblance to the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who argued that plants are able to unfold, adapt, change, and become in spite of not having a distinct essence or identity.

The past literatures mentioned above show that there are now a lot of scientific indications that suggest plants may be able to communicate chemically and thus possess language. But whether or not plants actually have a language is still up for debate, requiring more research.

Marder (2011) offers a philosophical study of plant life that highlights two significant obstacles to plant science. According to Marder, the conventional wisdom in philosophy has always maintained that only humans are capable of rationalization, abstract thought, and category creation. As a result, our unique perspectives and past experiences influence how we perceive other people, objects, the world, and everything in it. As a result, we try to understand plants by imposing our own way of thinking on them. The first is that we frequently view plants from a human viewpoint, and the second is a function of our deeply established mental habits, which require modification. Philosophical issues arise when people assume that plants can communicate just as well as humans do and compare human language to that of plants. Anthropocentric thought has long held that humans are superior to other animals and creatures due to their intelligence and ability to communicate through language. Humans are regarded as the pinnacle of creation and the standard by which all other living things must be measured.

There is a misconception that human language is superior to plant communication, which is the result of comparing the two. This difference between human and plant language often leads to the belief that plants are less intelligent than humans. It is common knowledge that plants lack the nerve system control and sensory mechanisms needed for language

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processing. More importantly, however, they do not have a brain like humans do. As a result, they are cognitively incapable of understanding or interpreting human speech. As such, plants are not as intelligent as humans when it comes to language. This analogy is incorrect because, as Marder notes, human language is based on a structured system that includes rules for precise meaning as well as syntax and semantics. However, plants do not make use of the same mechanism.

Plants use their body parts, leaves, flowers, and roots to interact with their surroundings even though they do not have neural systems. They bring themselves into being and change constantly, taking on new parts, giving up others, decaying, and finally passing away. Marder contends that ripening and fruit formation are inherent plant processes.

Plants have dynamic, rhythmic cycles associated with germination, growth, maturation, fruition, decay, and death. Just like humans, plants exist in specific spatial and temporal contexts. Plants are breathing, living things that interact with their surroundings and respond to outside stimuli. Despite the common misconception that plants speak in a passive manner, their actions speak volumes. Because they are able to modify themselves, plants develop and change gradually. Plants communicate through cycles. (Marder, 2011).

Marder makes an additional argument to support the others, saying that just because plants cannot communicate in a logical, syntactical way like humans can, it does not mean that they are not capable of thought or language. He contends that humans have assigned symbolic transcriptions and translatable representations to plants, but that these are not adequate representations of the language that plants speak.

The metaphors and symbols ascribed to plants by humans are insufficient to capture the essence of plant communication. There are an endless number of translations possible because plant language cannot be simplified to fit our comprehension. Humans have trouble understanding plant language because they frequently interpret it through a semantic articulation that is exclusive to humans.

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The ability to comprehend and interpret the distinct reality of the world of plants is made possible by the traditional language and mental model that are exclusive to humans. However, this human comprehension is insufficient to convey the profound uniqueness of plants. By analyzing Marder's theory, he argues that most of the time, plants communicate non-verbally by releasing chemicals, sending electrical signals, and utilizing cues that are still unclear to humans.

In a different way, plants are living entities that coexist with people in both space and time. They are vital components of the habitats in which they thrive because they engage with their environment and modify their behavior accordingly. Because of the natural progression of germination, slow growth, maturation (which symbolizes their essence), and the subsequent manifestation of their size and color, which culminates in eventual decay, an unethical transgression can be stopped without the intervention of humans. (Marder, 2011)

It is not appropriate to treat plants like inanimate, insensitive objects. Marder criticizes the devaluation and objectification of plants for practical uses, contending that flowers do not intrinsically embody the symbolic meanings associated with them and that they are instead inanimate objects with only symbolic significance.

Moving further into the discussion, Marder's (2011) counterarguments to anthropocentric thinking suggest that plants do not rely solely on language for thought processes. Furthermore, plants possess the ability to demonstrate causation, demonstrating how their surroundings influence and impact their appearance. Whether a plant is used for a specific purpose or not, its appearance possesses power all its own. Plants are more than just practical tools, as evidenced by the power they possess simply by virtue of their appearance.

To continue the discussion, Marder (2011) argues against anthropocentric thinking by pointing out that plants have mental processes other than language. Moreover, plants are able to exhibit causation, meaning they can show how their environment affects and changes how they look. A plant's appearance has power unto itself, whether or not it is used for a

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particular purpose. The power plants possess just by virtue of their appearance shows that they are more than just useful tools.

Numerous differences between plants and humans have been shown by scientific research, including the absence of neuro and nervous systems. Thinking like a plant is mostly sensory. Human intelligence and non-human communication should not be compared in any way. Plants can communicate even though they are not able to speak like humans.

They probably use different, more intricate techniques than we do. Marder's theory is supported by earlier studies, such as that of Moore (2000), who argues that plants are not mindless, passive entities but rather adapt and communicate with their surroundings. It also aligns with earlier research by Deleuze (1994), which claims that plants communicate through continuous evolution. It never stops growing, evolving, adjusting, and taking on the qualities of its environment.

Therefore, in order to understand the language of plants, it is imperative that we go back to the basic ideas of thought. Our anthropocentric viewpoint needs to shift if we are to comprehend the essence of plants completely.

This means that in order to bring about a fundamental shift in our thinking away from an anthropocentric perspective, we need to see ourselves as expansive, inclusive beings that consider not only humans and animals but also plants, rather than as superior and selective human beings.

Furthermore, Marder proposes that rather than merely engaging with plants according to a rigid categorization system, we should develop an ethical mindset and a curiosity to learn from them in order to enhance our comprehension of plant language.

According to Marder's analysis, we should reevaluate our relationship with plants and move away from a human-centered approach because the value of plants is different from that of human language. Plants can communicate with people and their surroundings in very special ways. It is not appropriate to advocate for plants. It is not appropriate to force plants

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to communicate using a language similar to our own. Moreover, awareness of the need to refrain from seeing plants as merely emotional symbols for humans. The relationship between botanicals and artists. For our own emotional comfort, we should not attach symbolic meanings to plants because they are beyond any symbol that humans have imposed. (Marder, 2011). He contends that a more comprehensive way of thinking is necessary to comprehend plants, as anthropocentric thinking, which gives meaning only to human viewpoints, obstructs our ability to truly comprehend plants as fundamental beings. Furthermore, he highlights the necessity of reassessing our comprehension of plants, acknowledging their uniqueness and individuality, as opposed to considering them as a universal idea or species, but rather as an embodiment of nature. It is morally right to steer clear of a human-centric viewpoint since plants are respected as unique forms of existence with a hidden language that humans cannot comprehend.

The link with Irigaray's (2016) viewpoint on plants further supports Marder's position. Irigaray also highlights the importance and worth of plants by emphasizing their crucial role in the healthy operation of the human body. This is especially clear during the essential process of respiration, in which life is sustained by the oxygen produced by plants in their surroundings.

Plants are essential to preserving both our emotional and physical well-being. All living things share the experience of breathing, which is vital to our existence. Moreover, our ethical perspective on plants aids in our understanding of their hidden language. Despite their inherent worth, plants cannot be exploited for selfish purposes. Although they are necessary for the production of food and for human habitation, careless destruction is not acceptable. According to Morton's (2012) earlier research, people have agency and shouldn't be used or exploited.

One aspect of nature that is shared by all is represented by plants, which are one single entity. Irigaray is in favor of the notion that plants are gifts from the natural world.

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Plants arouse our senses and serve as a constant reminder of our existence with their beautiful scenery, calming sounds, and delightful fragrances.

This in turn causes us to reflect on and value life. Furthermore, Irigaray seems to welcome the possibility of recognizing plants as moral role models. Through contemplation and observation of plants, in particular their slow, steady, and harmonious process of growth, transformation, deterioration, and death, they show how human virtues like tenacity, acceptance, and loyalty can nurture life. Its natural course is to grow and thrive. They have forgotten to set aside time and exercise patience with the organic rhythm and blossoming of life, in contrast to humans who are enslaved by the needs and desires of life. Karban's scientific research on cicadas and plants supports the idea that Irigaray put forth.

These plants are resilient because they have adapted their physiology to withstand periods of drought, infestations, and other forms of adversity. They effectively combat the infestation of sap-sucking insects that frequently assail them. As a result, humans learn important lessons from plants, such as the value of endurance and patience. (Irigaray, 2011).

Comparing Marder's theory of plant language to Irigaray's theory of the various linguistic articulations present in plants will help to clarify his ideas. Marder's theory is consistent with Irigaray's viewpoint, which maintains that plants do not communicate through spoken language. But it also teaches us important lessons, like how to value the silent life of plants and how to listen intently and from a different angle. Our relationship with them ought to be marked by an acute awareness and an absence of judgment.

Irigaray's more profound arguments, which maintain that plants do not have words, back up Marder's viewpoint. No single term can adequately convey the full meaning of this language. It's amazing that plants can express themselves verbally without using words to articulate or name things. According to Irigaray's fascinating theory, plants can communicate nonverbally by modifying their physical form. They continue to exist and develop, expressing themselves via their distinct appearance and modes of expression.

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Therefore, plants interact with their surroundings, communicate through germination, and use their built-in defense mechanisms in response to threats. Furthermore, plants develop and ripen, which marks the beginning of an ongoing cycle of renewal rather than the conclusion of a process. You could think of this complex process as the language of plants. Irigaray (2016)

The idea of Irigaray's plant language raises a profound question about the essence of Being, one that is quite different from its usual definition. Being emerges from the union of language and its expression, from the convergence of signifier and signified. Vegetation is the embodiment of Being in the state of letting its elements and deeds happen. (Irigaray 2016). A plant's growth is how it shows that it exists; this cannot be adequately expressed in human language.

The growth pattern of a plant is an expression of who it is and what it is all about. From a phenomenological perspective, becoming is the hallmark of the plant kingdom's natural language. Plants thrive and naturally produce the fulfillment of their existence through becoming. No word, phrase, or syntactic structure can fully capture their essence. Irigaray describes plants as altruistic beings that express themselves only through their own existence from a phenomenological perspective.

Plants communicate through a variety of processes, including transformation, embodiment, formation, and the production of fruits or blossoms. They use inexplicable means of communication, like growth, flowering, and fruit-bearing, to celebrate and show their appreciation to people who give them the chance to survive in their surroundings. According to Irigaray, subject and object relations are combined in human language, and one cannot exist without the other. Plants are different, though, in that they have predicates that are objectless.

In the case of plants, the predicate that matters is limited to those that are living, growing, and blossoming. Their language is centered on the essence of living and existing rather than any specific object. The act of moving and the process of becoming are included

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in the word itself. The plant just is, staying true to its roots and identifying only with its own essence; it does not appropriate other essences.

The plant's development, fruition, and regeneration symbolize the actualization and realization of its potential up until the point at which it becomes one. Applying the aforementioned ethical principle, human actions that deprive plants of their natural state include premature tree cutting and pruning during unfavorable weather. The plants are harmed by these immoral acts because they are unable to express their anguish.

Irigaray argues that rather than being a possession, speaking or using words is linked to the idea of Being. The act of being, free from the gaze of other people or things, is the expression and revelation of one's actual self. Words in human language frequently have a tendency to be manipulated to the point of ownership and quantification. Plants, on the other hand, transform through words. Plants represent the essence of being and becoming in harmony with their natural state through their growth and blossoming. Plants teach us that there are differences between existence and being in language. Irigaray promotes a way of living for humans that is similar to how plants grow, thrive, and are vibrant. She says that, like the appearance of fresh plants, it is important to cultivate breath and energy. Losing the silent language that tells us how to live is like being cut off from the plant world. (Irigaray, 2016)

In summary, Irigaray thinks that plants communicate with one another through their germination, growth, and decay processes, while Marder contends that plants communicate with one another through chemical reactions that they release into the environment. Plants communicate through their way of Being and Existing. But in order to comprehend plant language, humans will need to give up on anthropomorphizing and thinking of themselves as rational beings that are therefore superior to plants. A silent, nonverbal language that transcends word syntax is used by plants to communicate. Therefore, it is necessary to change language to be more accepting of the reality of things that cannot be translated.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, plants possess an exceptional existence, capable of manifesting themselves and conveying their own significance, devoid of any human intervention or influence. Their language differs from ours, and it is morally wrong to speak on behalf of plants and impose our own language, classification, and categorization upon them. Plants possess their own inherent expressions prior to any human intervention, formulation, or interference. By refraining from interfering with plants and acknowledging their inherent nature without imposing our own communication methods upon them, we ensure their well-being and safeguard their existence. To comprehend plants and engage in ethical conduct towards them necessitates relinquishing our anthropocentric mindset and reevaluating the suitable mindset that aligns with the needs of plants.

Recommendation

The research findings suggest that changing people's thoughts and consciousness is the first step toward helping humans form a moral bond with plants. This means recognizing plants as unique beings that cannot be compared to humans and eschewing the anthropocentric viewpoint and sense of superiority toward them. It is advised to leave plants alone and in their natural state. In addition, the multidisciplinary approach to plant exploration must be maintained because scientific advances in plant research have yielded important insights that not only advance our understanding of plant communication but also reinforce our ethical responsibility and obligation to care for plants.

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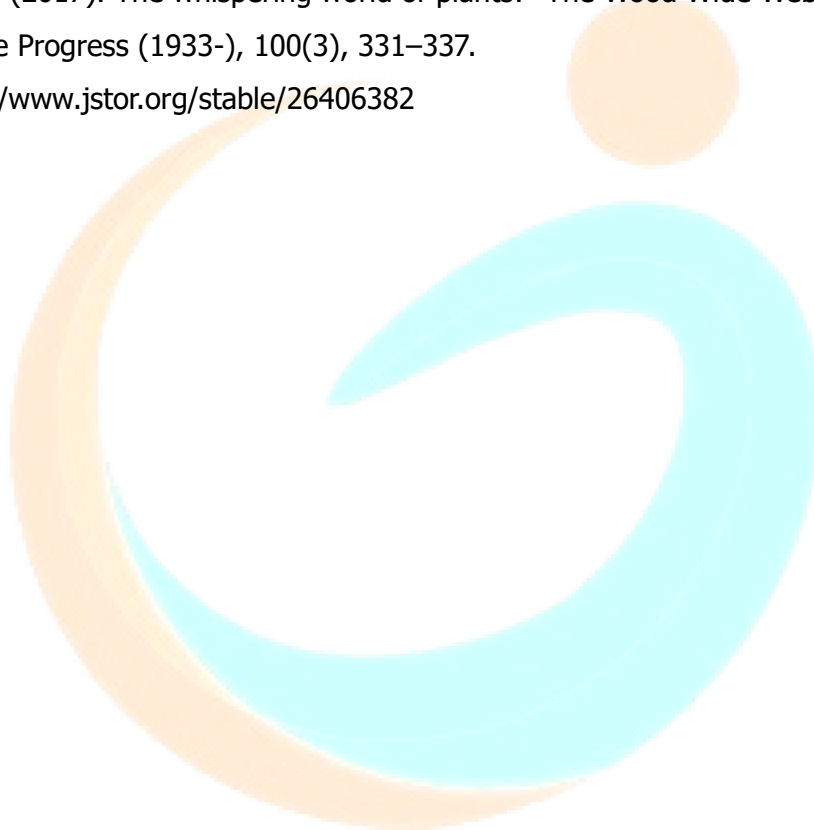


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