

Did you know that some plants live in, or close to, water?

They are called aquatic plants.

Some aquatic plants live fully submerged in the water, some live above the water and some live half in and half out of the water.

Aquatic plants have adapted to be able to live surrounded by water.

They can sometimes look similar to plants that grow on land, if they live at the edge of a pond or river, or they can look totally different if they live underneath the water.



Above the water

These water lilies live above the water. They have flat leaves and large flower heads that float on the surface of the water.

The floating leaves are usually tough and waxy. If they were fragile, the weather and water might damage them.

The leaves absorb sunlight that is used for making food, just like plants on land.

Water lilies have long stems and roots to anchor them into the mud at the bottom of the pond. The roots take up some water but the leaves can also absorb water from the pond.

The stems of water lilies are flexible so they can float away if the water is disturbed.



Half in, half out

This water iris lives at the edge of the pond, half in and half out of the water. The stems of the plant are strong and tall like the stems of land plants and the long, thin leaves absorb sunlight.

Water irises also have flowers, like many land plants, to attract insects for pollination.

Irises grow from rhizomes (underground stems) that are buried in the muddy riverbank. These underground stems hold the plants firm and upright, even if the water is moving around them.



Fully submerged

This Canadian pondweed is fully submerged, which means it lives underwater. It has many features that are different to land plants.

Canadian pondweed has floppy stems that move with the current of the water. If its stems were strong and rigid, they might break.

The leaves of submerged plants are small so the movement of the water doesn't damage them.

Roots grow all along the Canadian pondweed stem. The roots sometimes anchor themselves in the riverbed, but they can also float freely. The roots aren't needed to take in water because water, nutrients and gases are absorbed through the leaves.



Images used from: Wikimedia Commons/Public domain