

First flowers may have 'bloomed' in water, not on land

By Amina Khan, Los Angeles Times

By analyzing more than 1,000 fossil remains, scientists have discovered that an unassuming, 130-million-year-old water-dwelling plant could be one of Earth's first flowering plants.

Montsechia vidalii, described in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, could change many theories about how angiosperms, or plants with the ability to produce flowers, first came to be.

"Because it is so ancient and is totally aquatic," the study authors wrote, this extinct freshwater plant "raises questions centered on the very early evolutionary history of flowering plants."

Flowers are a relatively recent addition to the plant family tree; until they emerged, plants managed to reproduce without growing many-petaled lures for nectar-seeking insects.

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