

# Grass in the Environment



Image source:  
[www.pbs.org/hometime/house/enviro/images/grass2.jpg](http://www.pbs.org/hometime/house/enviro/images/grass2.jpg)  
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There are a great variety of grass plants found throughout the world. Some species of grass grow only an inch high, others may grow to be 100 feet tall. Some grass plants live less than a year, others may live forty years or longer. They thrive in a wide variety of habitats, from watery bogs to arid and temperate open spaces to the frozen tundra and several landscapes in between. Scientists are still learning about the grasses and what they have to teach us.

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## The Origin of Grasses

Until quite recently, the earliest examples of grasses found in the fossil record were dated to about 55 million years ago. To put this into perspective, it was often said that grasses did not evolve until after the age of the dinosaurs, which ended 65 million years ago. However, in 2005 the [discovery of grass in fossilized dinosaur excrement](#) changed our view of the origin of grasses, and pushed the probable date of their origin back by at least 10 million years.

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## Grasslands and Other Grass Communities

[Grasslands](#) are complex ecosystems in which grasses are the predominant plants, but often growing among a variety of other plants. Some of the more well-known grasslands of the world are:

- North American plains and prairie
- African Savannah
- South American pampas
- Steppes and puszta of Eurasia
- Veldts of South Africa
- Australian outback

Grasses are also an important part of [wetland](#) ecosystems.