

READING COMPREHENSION
SESSION 7
Fill in the gaps

A Useful Plant



Mosses are small flowerless plants that usually grow in dense green clumps, in damp and shady locations. The individual plants are usually composed of simple, one-cell thick leaves, covering a thin stem that supports them. At certain times they produce thin stalks topped with capsules containing spores. They are typically 1–10 centimetres tall, though some species are much larger, like Dawsonia, the tallest moss in the world, which can grow to 50 cm in height.

Species of moss can be classed as growing on: rocks, exposed mineral soil, disturbed soils, acid soil, calcareous soil, cliff seeps and waterfall spray areas, stream sides, shaded humusy soil, downed logs, burnt stumps, tree trunk bases, upper tree trunks, and tree branches or in bogs. While mosses often grow on trees as epiphytes, they are never parasitic on the tree.

Moss is often considered a weed in grass lawns, but is deliberately encouraged to grow under aesthetic principles exemplified by Japanese gardening. In old temple gardens, for example, moss can be added to carpet a forest scene, as it is thought to add a sense of calm, age and stillness. Moss is also used in bonsai to cover the soil and enhance the impression of age.

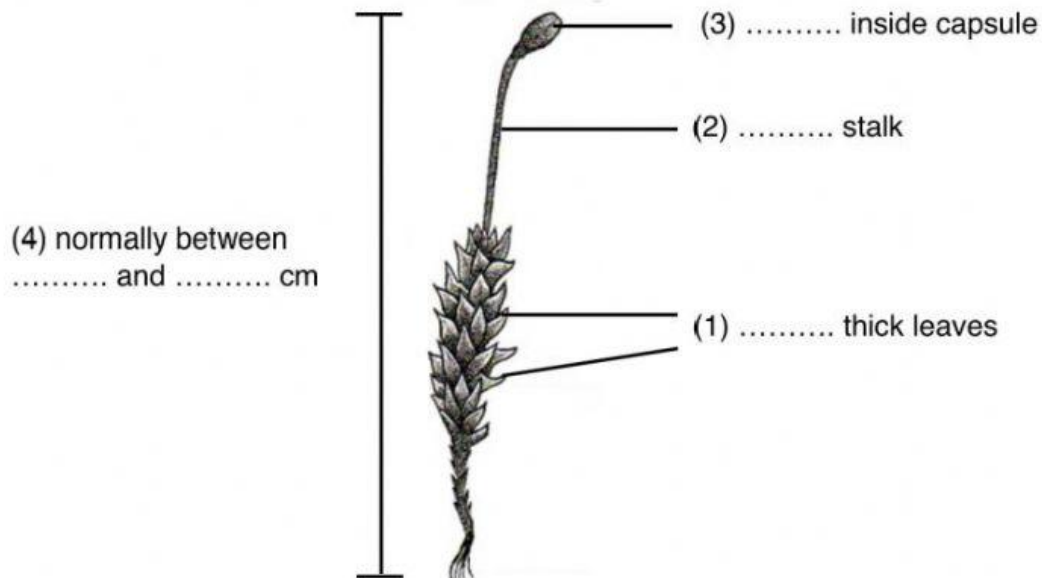
There is a substantial market in mosses gathered from the wild. The uses for intact moss are principally in the florist trade and for home decoration. Decaying moss in the genus Sphagnum is also the major component of peat, which is "mined" for use as a fuel, as a horticultural soil additive, and in smoking malt in the production of Scotch whisky.

Some Sphagnum mosses can absorb up to 20 times their own weight in water. In World War I, Sphagnum mosses were used as first-aid dressings on soldiers' wounds, as these mosses were said to absorb liquids three times faster than cotton, to retain liquids better, and to distribute liquids uniformly throughout themselves, as well as being cooler, softer and less irritating than cotton. It was also claimed that they have mild antibacterial properties.

Questions 1 to 4

Complete each label on the diagram below with **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text.

Parts of the moss plant



Questions 5 to 9

Complete the following summary using words from the box below

Mosses grow in (5)_____, shaded locations on rocks, soil, wood or in bogs. When mosses grow on trees, they are not classed as (6)_____, but when they grow on lawns, they are typically seen as (7)_____. Japanese gardeners believe that moss has special (8)_____, and it is often used as a (9)_____ in temple gardens.

dense	species	weeds
aesthetic	moist	sense
qualities	age	carpet
parasites		

Questions 10 to 13

Complete the table below using **NO MORE THAN ONE WORD** from the passage to fill each gap

TYPES OF MOSS	USES
• Wild, must be (10) _____ • Decaying Sphagnum • Some Sphagnum species	• Florist trade and home decoration • As a component of peat for: - fuel - horticultural (11) _____ - (12) _____ production • To dress (13) _____ during the First World War

