



Papyrus: The Plant that Changed the World: From Ancient Egypt to Today's Water Wars

John Gaudet

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At the center of the most vital human-plant relationship in history, Papyrus evokes the mysteries of the ancient world while holding the key to the world's wetlands and atmospheric stability.

From ancient Pharaohs to twenty-first century water wars, papyrus is a unique plant that is still one of the fastest growing plant species on earth. It produces its own "soil"—a peaty, matrix that floats on water—and its stems inspired the fluted columns of the ancient Greeks. In ancient Egypt, the papyrus bounty from the Nile delta provided not just paper for record keeping—instrumental to the development of civilization—but food, fuel and boats.

Disastrous weather in the sixth century caused famines and plagues that almost wiped out civilization in the west, but it was papyrus paper in scrolls and codices that kept the record of our early days and allowed the thread of history to remain unbroken. The sworn enemy of oblivion and the guardian of our immortality, it came to our rescue then and will again.

Today, it is not just a curious relic of our ancient past, but a rescuing force for modern ecological and societal blight.

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