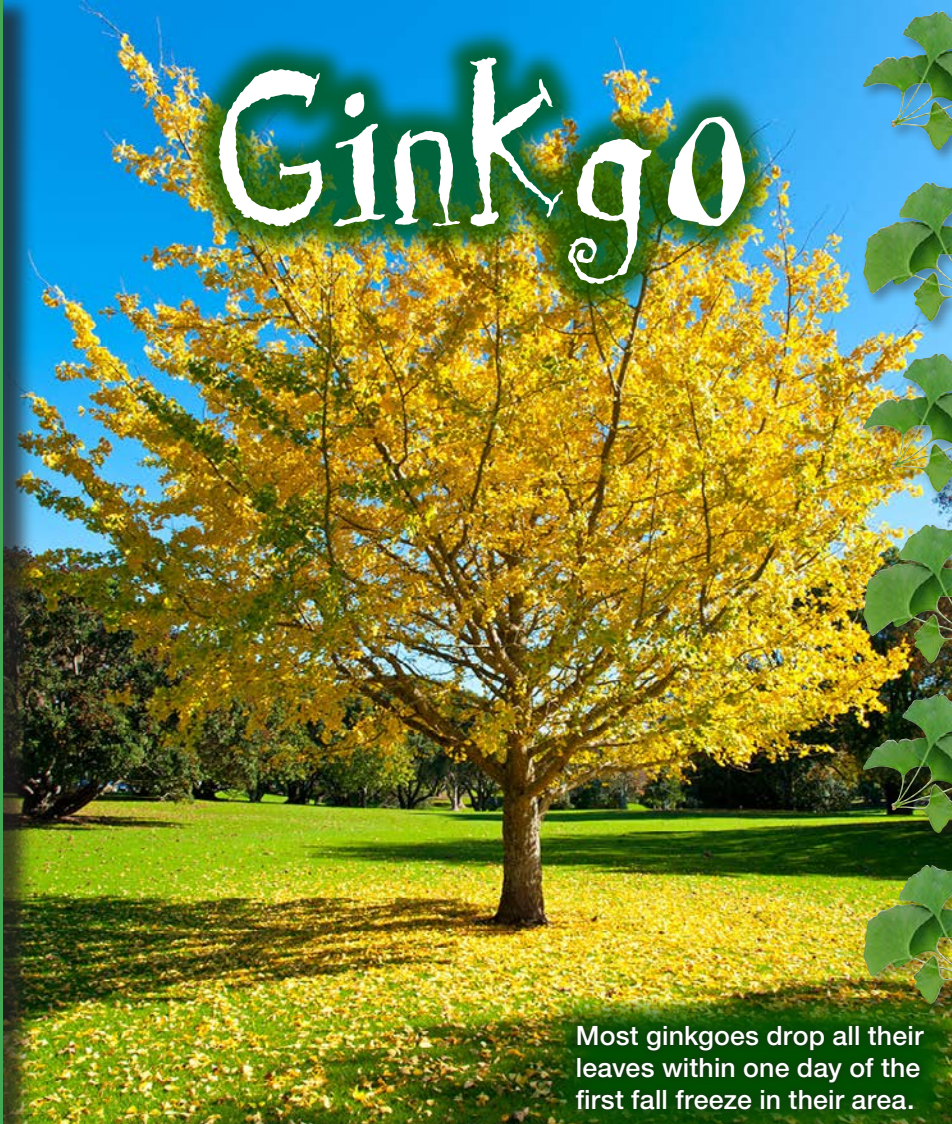


Ginkgo



Most ginkgoes drop all their leaves within one day of the first fall freeze in their area.

The Survivor

A lot of the plants that lived millions of years ago don't grow anymore. They died out. But ginkgo (GING-ko) trees have been around since the time of dinosaurs. In fact, ginkgoes are one of the oldest species of trees!

Today, people plant ginkgo trees along streets and in gardens. That's because they're pretty to look at and easy to grow—in heat or cold. They can also live for long periods without rain.

Ginkgoes have unusual, fan-shaped leaves. The leaves are made of many cells. Ginkgo leaves use light, carbon dioxide from the air, and water to make food for the plant. This process is called *photosynthesis*.

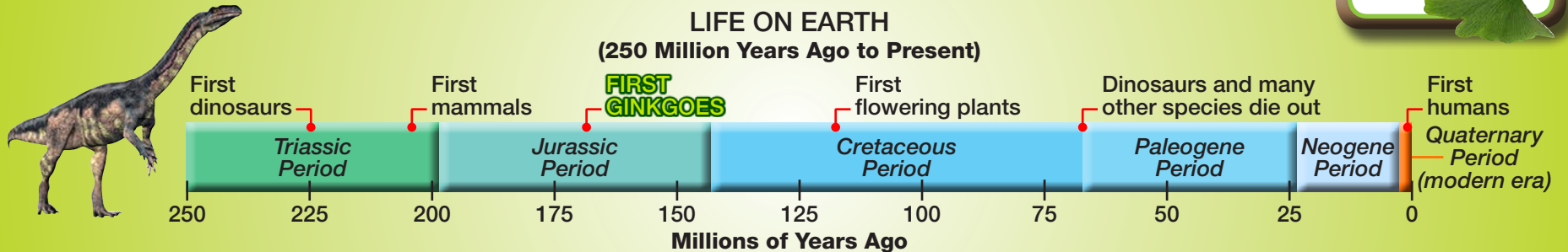
In the fall, ginkgo leaves turn gold before they fall off. New leaves appear the next spring.

Word Wise

The ginkgo's Japanese name is *ichou*, which means "duck foot."



LIFE ON EARTH (250 Million Years Ago to Present)



Smelly Trees

Ginkgo trees have many kinds of cells. Some of the cells help the plants reproduce. A ginkgo tree can be male or female. Male trees have cells for reproducing in their pollen. Females have these cells in ovules (AWV-youles). The wind carries pollen from male to female trees. Then the ovules on the female trees develop into seeds.

Ginkgo seeds have a fleshy outer layer. This layer smells like stinky cheese when it starts to rot!

Most people only grow male ginkgo trees because the ginkgo seeds from the female trees have an unpleasant smell.



ginkgo seed

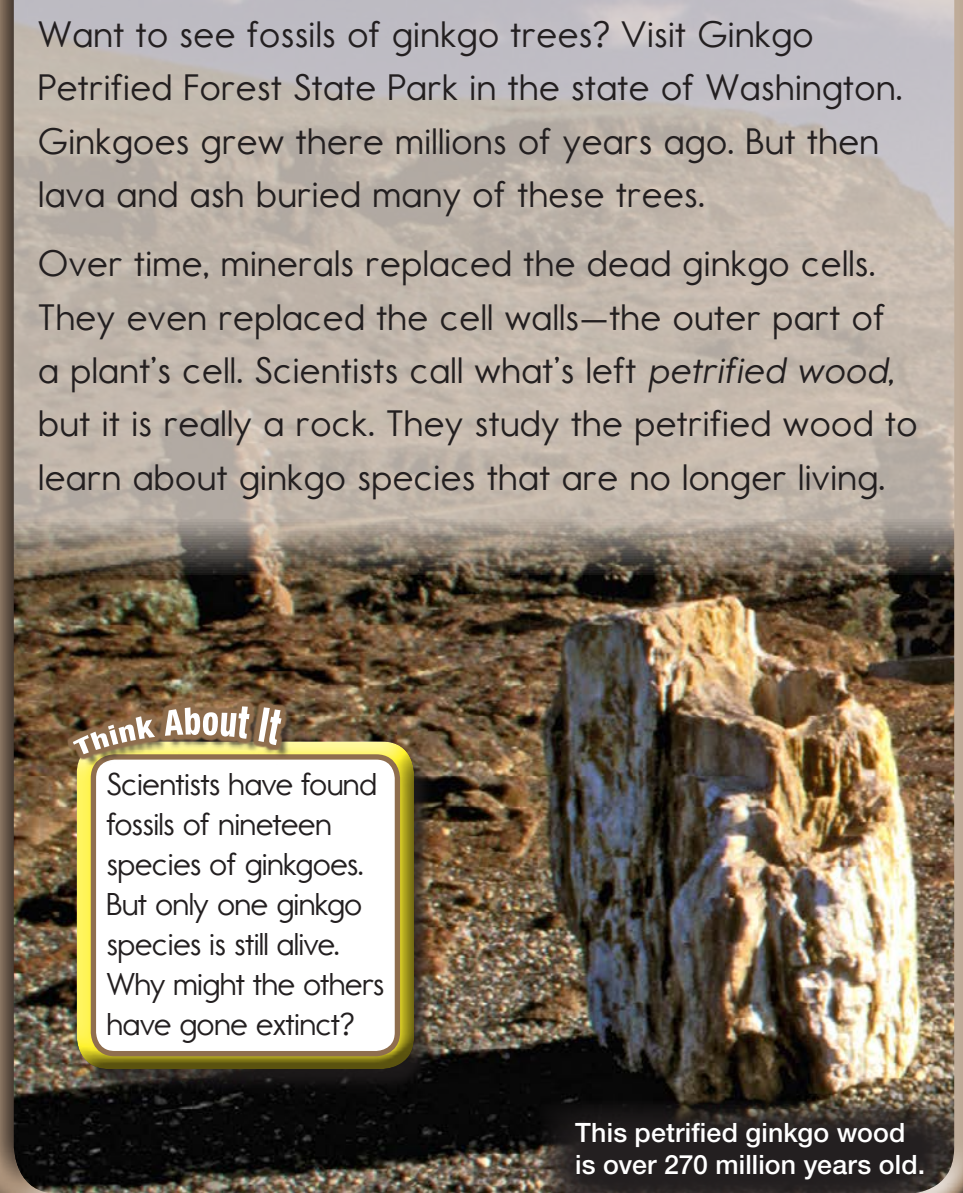
ANCIENT TREES

Want to see fossils of ginkgo trees? Visit Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park in the state of Washington. Ginkgoes grew there millions of years ago. But then lava and ash buried many of these trees.

Over time, minerals replaced the dead ginkgo cells. They even replaced the cell walls—the outer part of a plant’s cell. Scientists call what’s left *petrified wood*, but it is really a rock. They study the petrified wood to learn about ginkgo species that are no longer living.

Think About It

Scientists have found fossils of nineteen species of ginkgoes. But only one ginkgo species is still alive. Why might the others have gone extinct?



This petrified ginkgo wood is over 270 million years old.