

Friendly Fungi Protect Chocolate Tree

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 23 January 2013 09:07 -

Friendly fungi protect chocolate tree, as reported in *Nature*, vol. 427, p401, 29 January 2004. Farmers and gardeners fight a never ending battle against fungi that damage plants, but it seems that some fungi can be a plant's best friend. A group of scientists led by Elizabeth Arnold of University of Arizona, Tucson, have studied the cacao tree (the source of chocolate) to see how the trees protect themselves against phytophthora, a disease causing fungus similar to potato bight. Cacao trees that were most resistant to disease have numerous other fungi, called endophytes, living within their leaves. Endophytes do not cause any harm to the plants they live in, and are found in association with many types of plants, from grasses to trees. Some grasses pass on their endophytes from generation to generation in their seeds, but most plants seem to acquire them from surrounding plants. Keith Clay of Indiana University, Bloomington, suggests that endophytes may be associates of all plants and may provide useful means of biological control of plant diseases.

Editorial Comment: The more we study living organisms the more we find examples of co-operation, rather than competition. This is because God made the world good, and all living organisms from bacteria to the largest plants and animals were designed to help one another, not destroy one another. After man sinned and God cursed the ground, the whole world of living things degenerated and some organisms got out of control and became destructive. (Ref. endophytes, trees, fungi)