



Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence

By Stefano Mancuso, Alessandra Viola

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Are plants intelligent? Can they solve problems, communicate, and navigate their surroundings? Or are they passive, incapable of independent action or social behavior? Philosophers and scientists have pondered these questions since ancient Greece, most often concluding that plants are unthinking and inert: they are too silent, too sedentary -- just too different from us. Yet discoveries over the past fifty years have challenged these ideas, shedding new light on the extraordinary capabilities and complex interior lives of plants.

In *Brilliant Green*, Stefano Mancuso, a leading scientist and founder of the field of plant neurobiology, presents a new paradigm in our understanding of the vegetal world. Combining a historical perspective with the latest in plant science, Mancuso argues that, due to cultural prejudices and human arrogance, we continue to underestimate plants. In fact, they process information, sleep, remember, and signal to one another -- showing that, far from passive machines, plants are intelligent and aware. Through a survey of plant capabilities from sight and touch to communication, Mancuso challenges our notion of intelligence, presenting a vision of plant life that is more sophisticated than most imagine.

Plants have much to teach us, from network building to innovations in robotics and man-made materials -- but only if we understand more about how they live. Part botany lesson, part manifesto, *Brilliant Green* is an engaging and passionate examination of the inner workings of the plant kingdom.

Financial support for the translation of this book has been provided by SEPS: Segretariato Europeo Per Le Pubblicazioni Scientifiche.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Brilliant Green...* [is a] timely, highly accessible summar[y] of fast-developing fields... Combine[s] a passion for plants and a desire to illustrate their largely unsung complexities with an appreciation of the burden of proof needed to persuade us of a world that contains chlorophyllic sentience."

(New Scientist)

"Mancuso advocates for a second Copernican revolution, of sorts. Just as medieval people had to concede that the stars and planets don't orbit Earth, we must accept that the living world doesn't revolve around us."

(Maclean's)

"Mancuso and Viola blaze a trail of intrigue, to study the seemingly inaccessible, to fathom the unfathomable, to celebrate the essence of life on Earth....This book is nothing short of summer reading that broadens the soul."

(San Francisco Book Review)

"A brilliant fusion of historical and modern research, *Brilliant Green* is a quirky little book can be quickly read, yet it is captivating and eye-opening, and will make you stop and think. The authors' fervor and wit jolt the reader out apathetic anthropocentrism and we awaken in the fascinating world of plant intelligence."

(The Guardian's GrrlScientist)

"*Brilliant Green..* lays out the case for approaching plants as fellow intelligent life-forms... key insights to fields across the sciences, from botany to robotics."

(Boston Globe)

"A short primer/manifesto on the history and science of the [plant intelligence movement]."

(Salon)

"...a compelling and fascinating case not only for plant sentience and smarts, but also plant rights."

(The Guardian)

"*Brilliant Green...* [is a] timely, highly accessible summar[y] of fast-developing fields... Combine[s] a passion for plants and a desire to illustrate their largely unsung complexities with an appreciation of the burden of proof needed to persuade us of a world that contains chlorophyllic sentience."

(New Scientist)

"Read this book: it informs and excites the mind. Exuberantly translated from Italian by Joan Benham, *Brilliant Green* can be read in a sitting...an excellent work."

(The Biologist)

"...Mancuso, a leading scientist and founder of the field of plant neurobiology, presents a new paradigm in our understanding of the vegetal world."

(EarthTalk)

"[Brilliant Green] is an interesting book about plant intelligence with amazing examples of how plants routinely interact with their surroundings."

(Wildlife Activist)

"...an engaging and passionate examination of the inner workings of the plant kingdom"

(Davie Mustangs See The World)

"Referring to ground-breaking scientific studies and historical perspectives, the authors shake up our views of the plant world—one that we are totally dependent on for oxygen and food, and one that we cannot afford to take for granted."

(NEXUS Magazine)

"[Brilliant Green] is, like the best science, the product of a powerful imagination, one with the ability to see the world from a completely fresh and unencumbered point of view—and to communicate that perspective to the rest of us. So put aside for a couple of hours your accustomed anthropocentrism, and step into this other, richer and more wonderful world. You won't regret it, and you won't emerge from it ever quite the same again."

(From the foreword by Michael Pollan, author of "The Omnivore's Dilemma," "The Botany of Desire," and other books)

"Mancuso may be provocative, but he's not alone and he hasn't been for a long time."

(The Washington Post)

About the Author

Stefano Mancuso is the Director of the International Laboratory of Plant Neurobiology (LINV) in Florence, Italy, a founder of the International Society for Plant Signaling and Behavior, and a professor at the University of Florence. His most recent project is the Jellyfish Barge, a modular floating greenhouse which grows plants through solar-powered seawater desalination, featured in the 2015 Universal Expo in Milan. Mancuso's books and papers have been published in numerous international magazines and journals, and La Repubblica newspaper has listed him among the twenty people who will change our lives. Alessandra Viola is a scientific journalist, writer of documentaries, and a television scriptwriter. In 2011, she directed the Genoa Science Festival.

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Omar Carter:

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