

Mendel, 'Experiments in Plant Hybridization' (1866), Introduction

Experience of **artificial fertilisation**, such as is effected with ornamental plants in order to obtain **new variations in colour**, has led to the **experiments** which will here be discussed. The striking **regularity** with which **the same hybrid forms always reappeared whenever fertilisation took place between the same species** induced further experiments to be undertaken, the object of which was to **follow up the developments of the hybrids in their progeny**.

...That, so far, **no generally applicable law** governing the **formation and development of hybrids** has been successfully formulated can hardly be wondered at by anyone who is acquainted with the extent of the task, and can appreciate the **difficulties** with which experiments of this class have to contend. A **final decision** can only be arrived at when we shall have before us the **results of detailed experiments** made on **plants** belonging to the **most diverse orders**.

Those who survey the work done in this department will arrive at the conviction that **among all the numerous experiments** made, **not one** has been carried out to such an extent and in such a way as to make it possible to determine **the number of different forms under which the offspring of hybrids appear**, or to arrange these forms with certainty according to their separate generations, or definitely to ascertain their **statistical relations**.

It requires indeed some courage to undertake a labour of such far-reaching extent; this appears, however, to be the only right way by which we can finally reach the solution of a question **the importance of which cannot be overestimated in connection with the history of the evolution of organic forms**.

The paper now presented **records the results** of such a **detailed experiment**. This experiment was practically confined to a **small plant group**, and is now, after **eight years'** pursuit, **concluded** in all essentials. Whether the plan upon which the separate experiments were conducted and carried out was the best suited to attain the desired end is left to the friendly decision of the reader.