Stop 151 Kid’s Tour – Aquatic Plants, Stove House

Not all plants grow on land. Take a look in the center of this house where the old stove used to be. The large tank is filled with plants that naturally grow in water or wet areas! Some aquatic plants grow with only their roots under water, some have adapted to float on top of the water, and then there are those that are totally submerged and you wouldn’t see at all unless you were under water! In nature, aquatic plants add oxygen to the water and also provide food and shelter for animals living in and around them.

Do you see the tall grass-like plant along the water’s edge that looks like stalks of wheat? That’s rice. It looks similar to wheat because they are both members of the grass family, which also includes oats, corn and barley - plants that supply half of all the food eaten in the world!

In the center of the tank is an aquatic plant that the ancient Egyptians used – papyrus. The round feathery tufts of the leaves are certainly beautiful to look at, but it was the tall triangle-shaped leaf stalks that played an important part in history. When the stalks were cut open, long strips of the plant fibers were sliced and laid out crosswise in two layers. The layers were beaten and the natural gum held the strips together to form large sheets of paper to write on! Can you imagine how happy Egyptian kids were when they didn’t have to carry those heavy clay tablets back and forth to school anymore?

Now see if you can find aquatic plants whose leaves float on the surface of the water. Tropical waterlilies have brilliantly colored and fragrant flowers. Some types have leaves that can grow to 7 feet in diameter, but we don’t have room for those here! If you stop by to visit our waterlilies every day for a year, you’ll see at least one flower every time you come!