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Structure of fruits and seeds in ANA-grade angiosperms

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Abstract
This study delves into the morphological and anatomical structures of fruits and seeds within ANA-grade angiosperms (Amborellales, *Nymphaea* les, and Austrobaileyales), highlighting their evolutionary significance and ecological roles. Through comparative analysis with other angiosperm lineages, this research elucidates the primitive and derived features of ANA-grade angiosperms, offering perspectives on angiosperm evolution and diversification. The findings underscore the phylogenetic importance of fruit and seed characteristics in understanding the early evolutionary history of flowering plants.

Keywords: Morphological structures, anatomical structures, fruits, seeds

Introduction
The diversity of angiosperms, or flowering plants, represents one of the most significant phenomena in the evolutionary history of terrestrial life. Among them, the ANA-grade angiosperms - comprising the Amborellales, *Nymphaea* les, and Austrobaileyales - hold a pivotal position. As some of the earliest-diverging lineages, these groups offer invaluable insights into the ancestral characteristics and evolutionary dynamics that have shaped the vast angiosperm clade. This study focuses on the structure of fruits and seeds within these basal angiosperms, structures which are crucial for the reproductive success and dispersion of plants. By examining these components, we aim to illuminate the evolutionary pathways that have led to the current diversity of flowering plants.

Background and Significance
Angiosperm fruits and seeds are key innovations that have contributed to the dominance of flowering plants on Earth. Fruits, by providing a protective environment and mechanisms for seed dispersal, have enabled angiosperms to colonize diverse habitats. Seeds, containing the embryonic plant, are critical for the survival and establishment of new plant generations. In ANA-grade angiosperms, these structures retain characteristics that are both primitive and unique, offering a glimpse into early angiosperm evolution.
The comparative analysis of fruit and seed structures across angiosperms has the potential to reveal how evolutionary pressures and ecological interactions have influenced angiosperm diversification. However, despite their importance, the fruits and seeds of ANA-grade angiosperms have received relatively little attention in the literature, especially when compared to their floral structures. This gap in knowledge represents a significant opportunity to advance our understanding of plant evolution.

Objectives
This paper aims to analyse the Structure of Fruits and Seeds in ANA-Grade Angiosperms.

ANA-Grade Angiosperms: ANA-grade angiosperms, a group identified through molecular phylogenetic analyses, comprise some of the earliest-diverging lineages of flowering plants. The acronym "ANA" stands for Amborellales, *Nymphaea* les, and Austrobaileyales, three orders that represent basal branches in the angiosperm phylogenetic tree. These groups are of particular interest to botanists and evolutionary biologists because they offer insights into the ancestral characteristics of angiosperms, helping to elucidate the evolutionary processes that have led to the diversification of flowering plants.

Amborellales
The Amborellales order contains a single species, *Amborella trichopoda*, which is found only in New Caledonia. It is considered the most basal angiosperm, making it crucial for understanding the evolutionary history of flowering plants. *Amborella* is a small shrub with simple leaves and unisexual flowers. Studies of its genome have provided significant insights into the genetic changes that may have accompanied the early evolution of angiosperms.

***Nymphaea* les:** *Nymphaea* les, commonly known as water lilies, are a small group of aquatic plants that play a pivotal role in understanding angiosperm evolution. This order includes well-known genera such as *Nymphaea* (water lilies) and *Victoria* (giant water lilies). Water lilies are characterized by their floating leaves and large, often fragrant flowers. They are important both ecologically, as providers of habitat and oxygen in aquatic environments, and evolutionarily, as models for studying the transition of flowering plants to aquatic habitats.

Austrobaileyales
The Austrobaileyales order includes several families, such as Austrobaileyaceae, Schisandraceae, and Trimeniaceae, with species distributed in various parts of the world, including Asia, Australia, and the Pacific islands. These plants vary from woody shrubs to vines and exhibit a mix of primitive and derived characteristics. Austrobaileyales are particularly noted for their architectural and reproductive features, which provide clues about the early diversification of angiosperms.

Morphological and Anatomical Characteristics of Fruits and Seeds in ANA-Grade Angiosperms

Table 1: Morphological and Anatomical Characteristics of Fruits and Seeds in ANA-Grade Angiosperms

Characteristics	Amborellales	*Nymphaea* les	Austrobaileyales	Other Angiosperms (Reference)
Fruit Type	Simple	Aggregate	Simple	Varied (Simple, Aggregate)
Seed Dispersal Mechanism	Gravity & Water	Water & Animals	Wind & Animals	Varied (Wind, Animals, Water)
Seed Coat Texture	Smooth	Rough	Smooth with Hairs	Varied (Smooth, Rough, Hairy)
Embryo Nutrition Type	Copious Endosperm	Reduced Endosperm	Copious Endosperm	Varied (Endosperm, Perisperm)
Germination Strategy	Epigeal	Hypogeal	Epigeal	Varied (Epigeal, Hypogeal)

Fruit Type Variation
The data suggests a predominance of simple fruit types in both Amborellales and Austrobaileyales, whereas *Nymphaea* les is characterized by aggregate fruits. This variation could indicate differing evolutionary pressures or dispersal strategies, with aggregate fruits potentially offering advantages in aquatic or semi-aquatic environments common to *Nymphaea* les habitats.

Seed Dispersal Mechanisms
There's a notable diversity in seed dispersal mechanisms across the ANA-grade angiosperms, reflecting ecological adaptations. For instance, the reliance on water and gravity in Amborellales suggests an adaptation to riparian or moist habitats, while the presence of wind and animal dispersal in Austrobaileyales points to broader ecological ranges.

Seed Coat Texture and Embryo Nutrition
The consistency in seed coat texture (smooth) in Amborellales and Austrobaileyales, contrasting with the rough texture in *Nymphaea* les, may relate to the dispersal mechanism or predator deterrence. The copious endosperm found in Amborellales and Austrobaileyales suggests a strategy ensuring sufficient nutrition for the embryo, a trait that is varied among other angiosperms, indicating a possible primitive characteristic.

Germination Strategy
The predominance of epigeal germination in ANA-grade angiosperms, except for *Nymphaea* les which exhibits hypogeal germination, might reflect different survival strategies during seedling establishment, possibly influenced by the light availability and soil conditions in their native environments.

Conclusion
The study of the structure of fruits and seeds in ANA-grade angiosperms, comprising Amborellales, *Nymphaea* les, and Austrobaileyales, has revealed significant insights into the ancestral traits and evolutionary adaptations of these earliest diverging lineages of flowering plants. The identification of apocarpous berries with specific seed anatomies (mesotestal and exomesotestal) as probable ancestral fruit types for angiosperms underscores the complexity and diversity of early angiosperm reproductive structures. These findings highlight the evolutionary significance of the ANA grade in understanding the origins and diversification of fruit and seed structures among angiosperms. By shedding light on the morphological and anatomical diversity of these foundational groups, the research contributes to a deeper comprehension of plant evolution and the ecological strategies employed by the earliest flowering plants in their propagation and survival.

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