



## EDUCATION

### Truths About Transgenics

Providing "balanced information" about Bt corn, virus-resistant papaya, and other transgenic crops to students and the public is the goal of this new site\* from Colorado State University crop scientists. It includes a brief overview of how genetically modified plants are made (explained with nifty animations), which agencies regulate them, what's been planted, and what's in the pipeline, as well as a discussion of risks. A page of links leading to seed companies and antibiotech groups cautions that both "will certainly put a spin" on the facts.

\* [www.colostate.edu/programs/lifesciences/TransgenicCrops](http://www.colostate.edu/programs/lifesciences/TransgenicCrops)

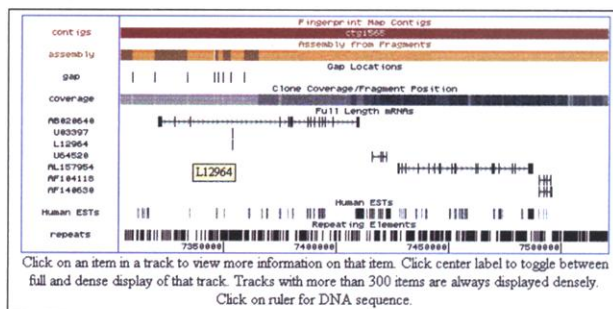
## TOOLS

### Roaming the Genome

Scientists gearing up to make sense of the public draft human genome now have a new way to home in on specific sequences. The University of California, Santa Cruz, genome team's Human Genome Browser\* begins with a search box into which users type a gene ID number, position, or key word (such as author or "cystic fibrosis"). Each hit then leads to a rulerlike box packed with info on that section—such as whether there are gaps, and details on which snippets of DNA actually code for genes. Although not the only way to troll the genome,† the browser has the advantage of using Santa Cruz's assembly, which is the most up-to-date. And the fast, simple interface—which lets you zoom in, pan out, or sidestep—is drawing raves from users, says developer Jim Kent: "We're hoping it will become people's first stop."

\* [genome.ucsc.edu/goldenPath/hgTracks.html](http://genome.ucsc.edu/goldenPath/hgTracks.html)

† [www.ensembl.org/genome/central](http://www.ensembl.org/genome/central)



Autònoma de Barcelona. Sample stumpers on the MQ2000 site cover both math (What is the maximum number of orthogonal vector fields on the 139,263-dimensional sphere?) and related lore. One question, for instance, notes that a well-known mathematician climbed Switzerland's Bietschhorn in August 1947 and asks, "In what year did he read his doctoral thesis?"

Participants must answer four questions in a row on a Bingo-style card to proceed to the next, higher scoring card. The value of each correct answer is determined by the famed Fibonacci sequence: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, ..., in which each number is the sum of the previous two. Says Aguadé, "The intention is to have fun."

\* [www.mq2000.org/mq2000/index.htm](http://www.mq2000.org/mq2000/index.htm)

## DATABASES

### R&D Storehouses

Want to find out what federal researchers have learned about using bugs to clean up toxic waste, or see which agency funds the most research on stem cells? GrayLIT Network offers free, one-stop access to more than 100,000 full-text technical reports from the Defense and Energy departments, NASA, and the Environmental Protection Agency.\* Another new site searches research award summaries for DOE, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health.†

\* [graylit.osti.gov](http://graylit.osti.gov)

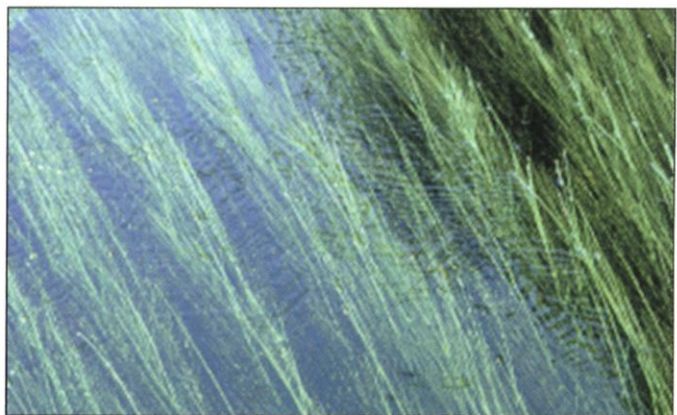
† [www.osti.gov/fedrnd](http://www.osti.gov/fedrnd)

## IMAGES

### Water Worlds

Clear water ripples over bayonet rushes (below) in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, a sandy, swampy, 400,000-hectare nature reserve where tannins tint streams the color of tea. The shot, by botanist Mary Allesio Leck of Rider University in Lawrenceville, took the grand prize in a photo contest at the Millennium Wetland Event,\* an international conference held this summer in Quebec City. There were more than 650 entries, and the Web exhibit of the 25 winners reveals the beauty hidden in these habitats and natural water filters. Surf over to see a green frog peeping from a Michigan pond, a worker picking cattail leaves in India, a rain-fed Estonian bog, and a tranquil waterway in the Okavango Delta in Botswana, South Africa's largest wetland ecosystem.

\* [www.hmrinc.com/Wetland\\_Event/Home.htm](http://www.hmrinc.com/Wetland_Event/Home.htm)



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## NET NEWS

### Online Math Jam

Sharpen your pencils, set your alarm clocks, and clean your mouses! On 17 October at midnight Universal Time, math mavens will kick off the first international 1-day Internet mathematics competition. The five people or teams that score the most points within 24 hours in Maths Quiz 2000\* will win a new Sun workstation.

The free contest was conceived by Manuel Castellet, director of the Centre de Recerca Matemàtica in Barcelona, Spain, to help celebrate 2000 as World Mathematical Year. Five mathematicians have come up with questions that will challenge even experts but are suitable for computer grading. "It is not a trivial challenge!" says team leader Jaume Aguadé of the Universitat