



APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING

Scientists have many ways to determine how closely plants are related. Taxonomists have traditionally grouped plants on the basis of visible characters. Details in flowers or other plant reproductive structures have proved to be especially useful. Look at the flowers in our family groups: can you see similarities?

Appearances, however, can be deceiving. Cacti and some succulent spurge are very similar in superficial appearance, but they are not closely related. Their similarities come from living in very arid climates. On the other hand, some closely related plants do not appear similar; for example, the teak tree and the common garden lantana are both in the verbena family.

