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**INTERACTIVE MULTIMEDIA: FIRST PLACE  
GENOMICS DIGITAL LAB: PLANT CELLS**

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"Plants are boring." which biology teacher hasn't heard that complaint? Jeremy Friedberg and his colleagues at Spongelab Interactive in Toronto, Canada, along with Tommy Sors, a student at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, set out to give teachers an effective response with a computer program and educational game dedicated to plant biology. The Genomics Digital Lab uses flash animation and 3D graphics to present plant life in a dynamic light. As the name implies, the program focuses on the genomics approach to exploring biology. A few clicks of the mouse take users deep inside a plant cell, where they can choose among the chloroplast, mitochondria, and nucleus for further exploration. Each organelle lab contains a brief explanation of its function and a game in which students must pick the best light, water, and soil conditions for the plant to ensure the organelle's optimal performance. The goal is to help students understand the connection between the tiny organelles and the entire plant, Friedberg says: "We have to look at the whole and how something fits in that whole."



The Genomics Digital Lab enjoyed a surge of popularity when Apple Inc. posted the program on its Web site in January. To date, teachers in 22 different countries have downloaded the program, Friedberg says.

The interactive nature of the program earned high marks from the judges. "I remember studying very basic cell biology and being bored to death, but the fact that it was an interactive computer game you could get your hands on and see direct results of too much sun and not enough sun was very pertinent in this day and age when folks are so far removed from the plant and the planet," says panel of finalist judges member Malvina Martin.

*\*Spongelab Interactive*