

UNIT 2



**FIRST KINGDOMS - Appendix**

 **LICHENS**

Lichens are made up of two tiny living things: a **fungus** and an **alga**. The fungus and the alga benefit from living together. The alga produces food, and the fungus gathers water. In this way a lichen can survive harsh weather that would kill a fungus or an alga growing alone. This type of relationship is called **symbiosis**.



A type of lichen called old-man's beard grows on a tree trunk in Scotland.  
*Niall Benvie/Nature Picture Library*

Lichens grow in most parts of the world. There are about 15,000 different species, or types. Lichens can live where few plants can survive. They are found in deserts, near mountain peaks, and in the frozen Arctic. They grow on stones, tree trunks, dead wood, and on the ground.

Most lichens are barely 6 millimeters high, but some can spread out to cover several feet. Many lichens look like flat, crusty blotches, some look leafy, some hang down in strands. Others have stalks and resemble miniature forests. Lichens range in colour from brown to bright orange or yellow.



A bird sits on a branch covered with lichen.  
*T. J. Rich/Nature Picture Library*

Some kinds of lichen are eaten by reindeer and even by humans. Other kinds are used to make dyes, medicines, and other products.

"Lichens", adapted from: <http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/article-9353385/lichen>.