

## Viewpoint: Are plants conscious? New York Times bungles story about how anesthetics can 'sedate' a plant

[T]he *New York Times* [recently] [ran a story](#) on a [scientific paper](#) about how anesthetics stopped motion in plants with a provocative headline for readers and scientists: "Sedate a Plant, and It Seems to Lose Consciousness. Is It Conscious?"

The article considers the idea at length, talking about "signs of plant intelligence" and comparisons with animals.

But the answer, unreservedly, is "no."

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Stefano Manusco and František Baluška, the lead scientists behind the 2017 paper, are famous in botany circles for espousing the idea of "[plant intelligence](#)." In a [2006 article](#) in the journal *Trends in Plant Sciences*, they and other colleagues announced a new field of inquiry called "plant neurobiology." That article was controversial, prompting a sharply written [rebuttal](#) by 36 renowned plant biologists, who suggested the field was "founded on superficial analogies and questionable extrapolations" – strong words for an academic debate.

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[P]lants lack a nervous system, which has long seemed requisite for discussion of animal-like behavior. [W]hile the way in which many anesthetics function in humans is [still a mystery](#), there is no reason why they or other chemicals shouldn't induce a response in any organism, let alone plants.

*Editor's note: Devang Mehta is a PhD candidate in plant biotechnology at ETH Zurich*

**Read full, original post:** [Plants are not conscious, whether you can 'sedate' them or not](#)