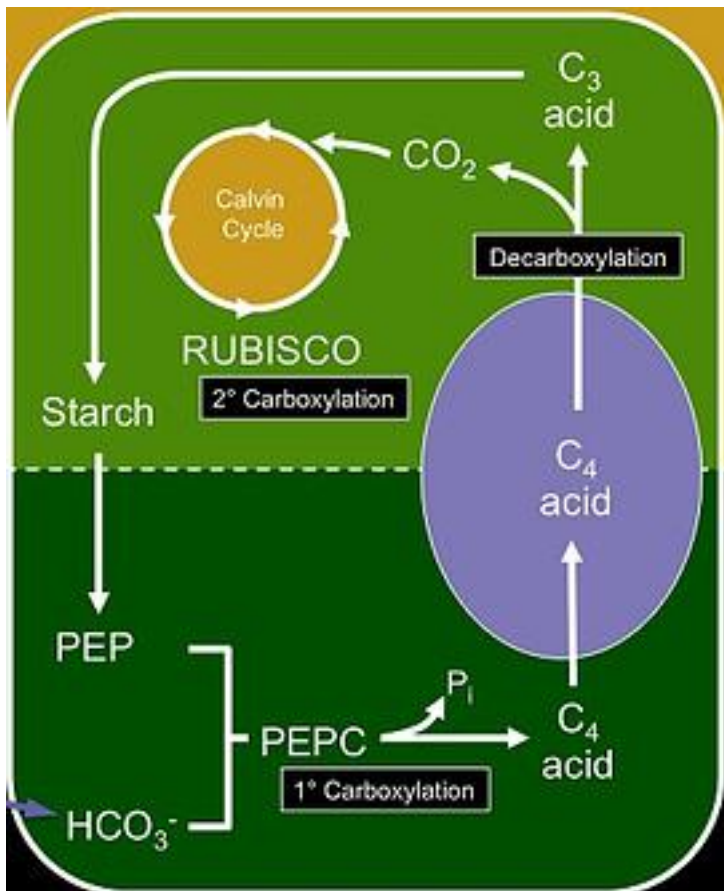


The Origins of C4 Grasslands



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The evolution of grasses using C4 photosynthesis and their sudden rise to ecological dominance 3 to 8 million years ago is among the most dramatic examples of biome assembly in the geological record. A growing body of work suggests that the patterns and drivers of C4 grassland expansion were considerably more complex than originally

assumed. Previous research has benefited substantially from dialog between geologists and ecologists, but current research must now integrate fully with phylogenetics. A synthesis of grass evolutionary biology with grassland ecosystem science will further our knowledge of the evolution of traits that promote dominance in grassland systems and will provide a new context in which to evaluate the relative importance of C4 photosynthesis in transforming ecosystems across large regions of Earth.

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