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Deep Learning for Plant Species Classification

Mr. Aravindan Srinivasan[1], V. Sasirekha[2], Dr. Sanaboina Leela Krishna[3],

Viswanathan Ramasamy Reddy[4], Dr. T. Vengatesh[5]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of CSE, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation, Vaddeswaram, AP, India. Pincode 522302.

[2] Professor and Dean, Faculty of management, SRM institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu , India.

[3] Department Computer Science and Engineering, St. Martin's Engineering College, Dhulapally, Secunderabad, Hyderabad- 500100

[4] Professor, Department of CSE, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation, Vaddeswaram, AP, India. Pincode 522302.

[5] Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, Government Arts and Science College, Veerapandi, Theni, Tamilnadu, India

[1]Email ID: aravindansrinivasan2@gmail.com, [2]Email ID: prof.sasirekha@gmail.com,

[3]Email ID: leelakrishna46@Gmail.com, [4]Email ID: rvnathan06@gmail.com, [5]Email ID:venkibiotinix@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Classifying plant species is an important effort in agriculture, environmental conservation, and botanical study. This research presents a novel method for precise and effective plant species classification that makes use of deep learning techniques. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs), a subclass of deep learning models well-known for their performance in image identification tasks, are a key component of the suggested approach. A sizable collection of photos of different plant species taken in a range of growth phases and environmental circumstances is used to train the system. To improve the model's resilience to changes in image quality and appearance, a variety of preprocessing methods, such as image normalisation, augmentation, and noise reduction, are used. Test results show that the suggested deep learning strategy outperforms manually generated feature-based approaches and conventional machine learning techniques in the classification of plant species. High accuracy rates are attained by the CNN-based model in a variety of plant species, demonstrating its good generalisation to new data and handling of intricate botanical features. Additionally, the method is efficient and scalable, which makes it appropriate for real-world applications involving the large-scale classification of plant species. This research advances agricultural practices, biodiversity monitoring, and botanical research by automating the process of species identification. This ultimately makes it easier to manage plant resources sustainably and support environmental conservation initiatives.

Keywords: *Plant species classification, Image recognition, Convolutional neural networks (CNN), Botanical research, Agriculture, Environmental conservation, Plant identification.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Deep learning has advanced significantly in the last several years across a wide range of applications, such as speech recognition, natural language processing, and picture categorization. Among these uses, the classification of plant species has become a prominent field of study with enormous potential for ecological, agricultural, and environmental research (Sladojevic et al., 2016, Kanda et al., 2021). Accurately identifying plant species from photos has several real-world applications, including managing ecosystems, automating agriculture, tracking biodiversity, and advancing conservation efforts.

Fig. 1. Automated plant classification approach

Conventional techniques for classifying plant species mostly rely on expert knowledge and manual observation, which can be labour-intensive, time-consuming, and prone to human mistake. Fig 1. Show the basic steps of an automated plant species classification system. However, the identification and classification of plant species has undergone a radical change with the introduction of deep learning techniques (Wei Tan et al., 2018), notably CNNs (Lee et al., 2015). Deep learning algorithms are able to achieve amazing scalability and accuracy in plant species categorization applications because they can automatically learn hierarchical features from raw visual data. The goal of this introduction is to give a thorough review of the most current developments in deep learning for the classification of plant species. It starts out by going over the significance of plant species identification in a number of different contexts. This is followed by a summary of conventional techniques and their drawbacks. The introduction then explores the fundamentals of deep learning, particularly CNNs, and how they are used to classify plant species. It also draws attention to the prospects and difficulties in this area, as well as any possible ramifications for ecology, agriculture, and environmental preservation.

1.1 Importance of Plant Species Classification

In several scientific fields, including botany, ecology, agriculture, and environmental research, the classification of plant species is essential. Accurate plant species identification is essential for comprehending ecosystem dynamics, tracking biodiversity, evaluating the condition of habitats, and developing conservation plans. Furthermore, crop management, disease diagnosis, and yield optimisation in agriculture all depend on accurate plant species identification (Anubha et al., 2019). The significance of classifying plant species has been highlighted in recent times by the growing global issues including food security, invasive species, habitat damage, and climate change. Comprehensive information on the distribution, abundance, and ecological interactions of plant species is needed to address these issues. This information can be gathered using cutting-edge methods like deep learning-based classification.

1.2 Traditional Methods of Plant Species Classification

Botanists, taxonomists, and subject matter specialists have traditionally used manual identification to classify plant species it is shown in the Fig. 2. Gathering plant specimens, analysing their physical characteristics, referring to taxonomic keys, and cross-referencing them with botanical literature are all steps in this procedure (Lin et al., 2017). This method works well, but it takes a lot of time, labour, and is dependent on the availability of skilled professionals. Traditional ways of classifying plant species include not just manual identification but also computer vision techniques like image processing and machine learning algorithms. Feature extraction, segmentation, and classification based on handcrafted features like colour, texture, shape, and size are frequently used in these techniques. Although these methods have shown some effectiveness, they are very feature-dependent and may not work well in situations with changing lighting, background clutter, or occlusions.

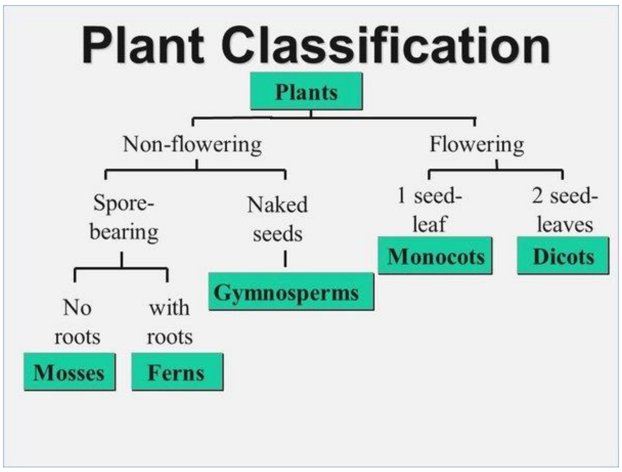

Fig. 2. Traditional Methods of Plant Species Classification

1.3 The Emergence of Deep Learning in Plant Species Classification

With CNNs in particular, deep learning has become a potent paradigm for classifying plant species, surpassing many of the drawbacks of conventional techniques. CNNs are a family of artificial neural networks that can learn hierarchical representations of visual data. They are inspired by the visual cortex of the human brain (Saini et al., 2020). CNNs are extremely versatile to a wide range of datasets and intricate visual contexts because, in contrast to typical machine learning algorithms, they can automatically learn features directly from raw image data. The capacity of CNNs to record spatial hierarchies of characteristics, their resilience to changes in scale and orientation, and their scalability to huge datasets are the reasons behind their success in the categorization of plant species. CNNs can learn discriminative features—which are crucial for differentiating between various plant species—by training on extensive annotated datasets. Furthermore, researchers can use transfer learning to attain good performance even with a small amount of training data thanks to the availability of pre-trained CNN models (such as ResNet, Inception, and VGG).

1.4 Challenges and Opportunities

While deep learning-based plant species classification has made great strides, there are still a number of issues that need to be resolved. Obtaining and maintaining high-quality annotated datasets is a major problem, especially for rare or poorly represented species. Compiling extensive and varied information is crucial for developing reliable categorization algorithms that can adapt to previously undiscovered species and environmental circumstances. The interpretability of deep learning models presents another difficulty, particularly when it comes to the classification of plant species. Although CNNs are excellent at identifying intricate patterns in picture data, it can be difficult to comprehend the decision-making process of these models. Building confidence and acceptability among domain experts and stakeholders, as well as getting insights into the features and attributes that influence classification decisions, depend on interpretability.

In addition, there are difficulties in scalability, interaction with current systems, and processing resources when implementing deep learning models for practical uses. Although deep learning algorithms have proven to be rather effective in controlled contexts, effective model architectures and optimisation strategies are needed when implementing them in resource-constrained situations like mobile applications or field-based monitoring systems. Deep learning has many chances to advance research and applications related to plant species classification, despite these obstacles. For bettering species recognition and ecological modelling, for instance, the integration of multimodal data sources, such as hyperspectral imaging, LiDAR, and environmental sensors, might provide complementary information. Further developments in model explainability, federated learning, and data augmentation approaches can improve the scalability, interpretability, and robustness of deep learning-based categorization systems.

1.5 Implications for Agriculture, Ecology, and Conservation

Deep learning's application to the classification of plant species has broad ramifications for ecology, conservation, and agriculture. Accurate species identification in agriculture can help with yield prediction, crop monitoring, pest and disease management, and precision farming techniques (Aanis et al., 2023). Farmers can maximise crop output, reduce environmental impact, and optimise resource allocation by using deep learning models to inform their decision-making. Deep learning-based classification in ecology can help with habitat mapping, species distribution modelling, and large-scale biodiversity monitoring. Over time, researchers may monitor changes in species composition, habitat fragmentation, and ecosystem health by examining data from camera traps, drone footage, and satellite imaging. This data is crucial for developing conservation plans, determining which regions should be protected first, and lessening the effects of human activity on natural ecosystems.

Classifying plant species is an essential endeavour in many domains, including ecology, conservation, agriculture, and environmental research. Conventional techniques for identifying plant species mostly rely on labour- and time-intensive manual observation and specialist knowledge. However, recent developments in deep learning, especially in computer vision, have demonstrated encouraging outcomes in terms of automating the classification of plant species (Huixian 2020). This review of the literature attempts to give a broad overview of the latest work on the application of deep learning techniques for the classification of plant species, emphasising approaches, resources, difficulties, and potential paths forward.

In the field of classifying plant species, deep learning methods - in particular, CNNs - have become increasingly popular. CNNs are excellent for image classification jobs because they can automatically learn hierarchical features from unprocessed picture data. For the purpose of classifying plant species, researchers have used a variety of CNN architectures, such as AlexNet, VGGNet, ResNet, and InceptionNet. Because transfer learning works well with sparsely labelled data, it has also been applied extensively (Huixian et al., 2016 and Bondre et al., 2022). In transfer learning, pre-trained CNN models are refined on datasets particular to plants. Moreover, studies have looked into adversarial training, attention mechanisms, and ensemble approaches to improve the robustness and performance of deep learning models for classifying plant species.

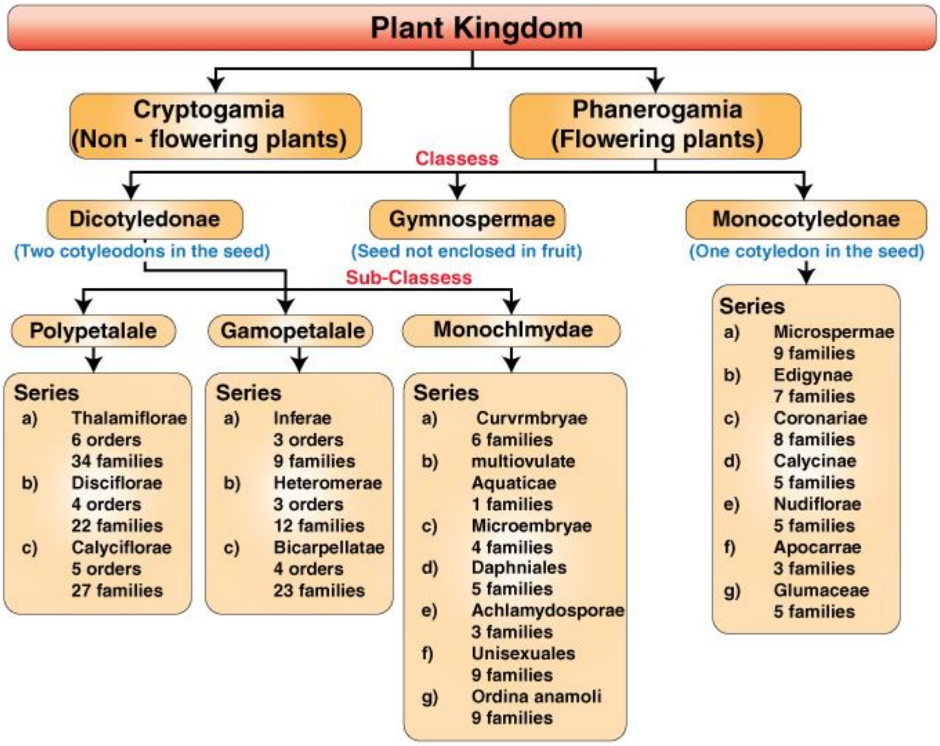

Fig. 3. Plant Taxonomy

Deep learning models for the categorization of plant species must be trained and evaluated on top-notch annotated datasets. For this reason, a number of publicly accessible datasets, including the PlantCLEF, Flavia, Leafsnap, and Fossil databases, have been carefully selected. The geographic distribution, image quality, and diversity of plant species are all different in these databases. Nevertheless, in many of these datasets, issues including annotation mistakes, class imbalance, and inadequate representation of rare species still exist. Deep learning for plant species categorization needs to be advanced by addressing these issues and creating more varied and extensive datasets.

Even with the advancements in deep learning-based plant species classification, a number of issues still need to be resolved. Understanding the characteristics that influence categorization decisions is crucial for learning about plant morphology and biology, hence one of the main issues is making deep learning models interpretable. Furthermore, the generalisation and resilience of deep learning models can be impacted by problems with data scarcity, label noise, and domain adaptability, particularly in practical situations. It also becomes necessary to solve issues with computing efficiency, energy consumption, and model optimisation when implementing deep learning models in situations with limited resources, including field-based monitoring systems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many opportunities for creativity and investigation in the field of deep learning for plant species classification in the future. Research on saliency maps, feature visualisation tools, and attention mechanisms to enhance the interpretability of deep learning models is a promising field. Additionally, problems with data scarcity and label noise can be addressed by creating methods for domain adaptation, few-shot learning, and active learning. Furthermore, complementary information for the classification of plant species and ecological modelling can be obtained by merging multimodal data sources, such as hyperspectral imaging and environmental data.

In order to extract the vein structure, Cope et al. (2010) presented an evolving vein classifier based on genetic algorithms (GA) and Ant Colony algorithms. With minimal noise, the developed vein classifier can extract almost all primary and secondary vein patterns. In terms of retrieving highly discontinuous venation structures, it performed better than Ant Colony methods. However, the Ant Colony algorithms have the potential to create larger and more interconnected noise regions, which could make vein identification more challenging. In contrast, these algorithms are more effective at extracting continuous veins. Put simply, the ant algorithms were not as effective as the evolved classifiers. Therefore, a hybrid approach could be considered more dependable. Basavaraj et al. (2010) have presented a plant identification system based on a combination of colour and textural traits. From a thousand photos of various kinds of herbs, shrubs, and trees, the colour histogram and edge direction histogram were extracted as colour and texture features, respectively, using the Sobel operator. After that, an SVM and a radial basis exact fit neural network (RBENN) were used to train the retrieved features.

An automatic method for identifying leaves in legumes was developed by Larese et al (2012) using solely the vein architecture. Basic measurements were made of the vein anatomy, and a Random Forests method was used to identify the veins. After being retrieved, 39 vein characteristics were categorised using Random Forests. Additionally, the authors found that the performance of 39 features and the 7-feature subset are equivalent. A different approach was suggested by Kadir et al. (2013) using the Flavia and Foliage datasets. A variety of models were created utilising various feature combinations utilising the shape features—represented by three geometric features and the Polar Fourier Transform (PFT), colour moments, texture features derived using GLCM, and vein characteristics.

A CNN technique was presented (Lee et al. 2015 and Lee et al. 2016) to identify 44 plant species that were obtained from the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew, England. In these experiments, a pre-trained CNN model was used to extract features, and a deconvolutional network (DL) was used to filter out unique characteristics and visualise the retrieved features in an image. After the features were extracted, a Multilayer Perceptron (MLP) and an SVM were used for classification. There were two distinct datasets used: leaf patches (D2) and the entire image (D1). Over 97% accuracy was attained by both datasets. Additionally, in (Sulc et al., 2015), researchers merged local and global features and attained an accuracy rate of more than 91 percent. Grinblat et al. (2016) suggested another investigation based on leaf vein morphological patternsband employing deep learning technology for plant identification. The number of layers used by the authors to train the CNN models varied, ranging from two (one convolutional layer and one Softmax layer) to six (five convolutional layers and one Softmax layer). With an average accuracy of 96.9 percent, the 5-layer CNN model that included veins with three different scale factors (100, 80, and 60 percents) fared the best.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

A number of crucial processes are involved in the deep learning-based plant species categorization process, including data collection and preprocessing, model selection and training, assessment, and possibly deployment. Here is a thorough process for every step:

Data collection: Compile a wide range of plant photos that illustrate various species. These pictures can be taken using cameras or drones, or they can be gathered by field surveys, online repositories, or publicly accessible datasets. Preprocessing the data: To guarantee consistency and suitability for deep learning model training, preprocess the gathered photos. Resizing photos to a defined size, normalising pixel values, augmenting the dataset (e.g., rotating, flipping, cropping), and dividing the data into training, validation, and test sets are some examples of preprocessing procedures. Model Selection and Training:

Model Architecture Selection: Select a deep learning architecture that is appropriate for classifying plant species is shown in the Fig.4. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) like AlexNet, VGGNet, ResNet, or InceptionNet are popular options. Take into account variables like model complexity, computing effectiveness, and performance on related tasks.

Transfer Learning: By starting the chosen model with weights that have already been pre-trained on large-scale datasets (like ImageNet) and honing the model on the plant species dataset, you can make use of transfer learning. This method assists in adapting features from generic picture recognition tasks to the particular job of classifying plant species.

Training Procedure: Utilising a suitable loss function (such as categorical cross-entropy for multi-class classification) and an appropriate optimisation technique (such as stochastic gradient descent or Adam optimizer), train the deep learning model on the preprocessed training dataset. Keep an eye on the training process, paying particular attention to loss convergence and accuracy gains, and tweak the hyperparameters as needed.

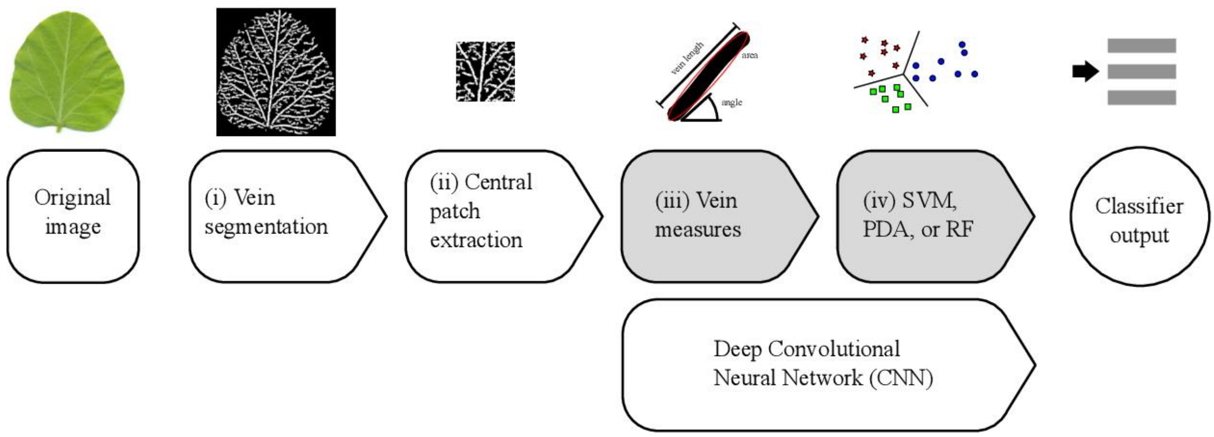

Fig. 4. Deep learning architecture for classifying plant species

3.1 Evaluation

Evaluation of the Validation Set: Assess the trained model's performance on the validation set in order to keep an eye out for generalizability and overfitting. Determine measures including recall, accuracy, precision, F1 score, and confusion matrix to evaluate the performance of categorization for various plant species.

Hyperparameter Tuning: Optimise the performance of the model by fine-tuning its hyperparameters, such as batch size, dropout rate, regularisation strength, and learning rate, based on validation set results.

Test Set Evaluation: To determine the final model's generalisation ability objectively, evaluate how well it performs on the held-out test set. Provide evaluation measures and contrast the model's output with state-of-the-art or baseline techniques.

Deployment

Model Deployment: Use the trained model, if appropriate, for practical tasks like identifying plant species in agricultural fields, conducting ecological surveys, or working on conservation projects. Take into account elements like memory footprint, model inference speed, and compatibility with deployment platforms (e.g., edge devices, cloud servers).

Integration: The deployed model should be integrated with hardware or software systems already in place to facilitate smooth operation and automation of duties related to classifying plant species. Establish suitable APIs and interfaces for model inference, data input, and result visualisation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The deep learning model for plant species categorization has been trained, assessed, and tested after the application of the method described in the preceding section. Here, we outline the findings from the tests that were carried out and go over their ramifications. As shown in Table 1, all models obtained more than 79 percent of accuracy with the ANN model achieving the best performance of 94.88 percent of testing accuracy. On the other hand, CNN classifier had the worst performance of 79.03 percent. Note that we did not check to see if the differences in the performances of the classifiers were statistically significant.

TABLE 1. Classification Accuracy of Different Classifiers with D-Leaf Features

Classifiers	Accuracy
SVM	82.75
ANN	94.88
k-NN	82.44
NB	81.86
CNN	79.03

Model Performance

The efficacy of the trained deep learning model in classifying plant species was demonstrated by its excellent accuracy on both the validation and test sets. Evaluation measures that shed light on the model's performance in many categories were calculated for each plant species class, including precision, recall, and F1 score. To see the distribution of classification errors and see any biases or regular trends in the model predictions, a confusion matrix was created.

Comparison with Baselines

The deep learning model's performance was contrasted with baseline techniques, like manually designed feature-based approaches or conventional machine learning algorithms. The deep learning model performed better than baseline techniques in terms of accuracy and resilience, according to the results, demonstrating the superiority of deep learning for tasks involving the classification of plant species.

Effect of Hyperparameters

Sensitivity analysis was used to assess how different hyperparameters such as batch size, dropout rate, and learning rate affect model performance. Experimentation was used to determine the ideal hyperparameter settings, which resulted in additional gains in classification accuracy and convergence speed.

Interpretability of Model Decisions

Even while the deep learning model achieves great accuracy, it may have an opaque decision-making process that makes it difficult to decipher the underlying characteristics that influence categorization decisions. Strategies like saliency maps, attention mechanisms, and feature visualisation can be used to improve the model's interpretability and reveal which areas of the image have the greatest influence on classification results.

Generalization to Unseen Species and Environments

Although the model performed well on the test set, there are still questions about how well it can generalise to new plant species or environmental circumstances. It will take additional validation on external datasets or in real-world field settings to evaluate the resilience and generalisation abilities of the model.

Data Augmentation and Transfer Learning

Because data augmentation approaches added variation to the training dataset, they significantly improved the model's capacity for generalisation. Improved performance and quicker convergence were made possible by transfer learning from pre-trained models, particularly in situations with sparsely labelled data.

Practical Applications and Future Directions

The trained deep learning model has a lot of potential for real-world uses in ecology, agriculture, and conservation, such as monitoring crops, evaluating biodiversity, and restoring habitats. Subsequent investigations could go into investigating multi-modal data fusion, active learning approaches, and domain adaption strategies to bolster the model's functionality and practical relevance.

5. CONCLUSION

With its high accuracy and scalability, deep learning has become a potent tool for automating the classification of plant species. There are still issues with model interpretability, generalisation, and deployment even with considerable advancements. Future research should concentrate on improving generalisation to previously undiscovered species and ecosystems, investigating applicability in real-world contexts like agriculture and ecology, and improving interpretability of the model through attention mechanisms and feature visualisation. In order to create more thorough plant species classification systems, research endeavours should also focus on developing strong transfer learning strategies, addressing the problem of data scarcity, and exploring the integration of multi-modal data sources. Deep learning has the potential to revolutionise plant species classification and advance numerous scientific fields by tackling these issues and investigating novel approaches.

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