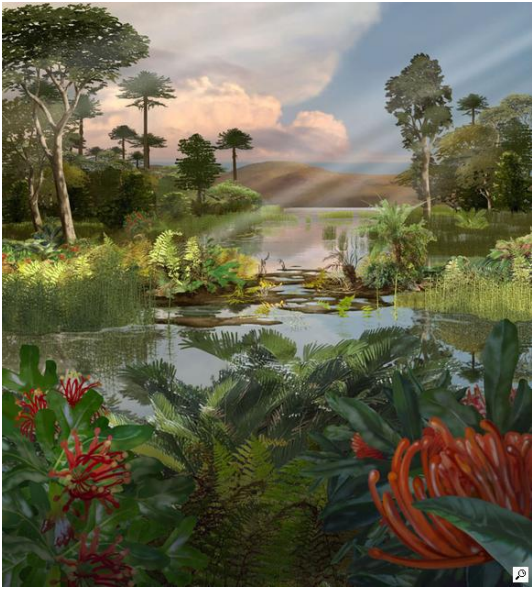


Cretaceous Plant Life



The terrestrial environments in which Early Cretaceous animals lived were still dominated by ferns, seed ferns, Bennettitaleans, conifers and cycads, but angiosperms (flowering plants) also became part of the flora at this time, about 135 million years ago. Angiosperms diversified rapidly, and by the end of the Cretaceous were by far the most diverse group of terrestrial plants. Many explanations have been offered for their rapid diversification, but the true explanation is probably quite complex. Some Cretaceous flowering plants may have had their seeds dispersed by animals, but that was also true of other kinds of plants. Today, some species of flowering plants grow rapidly compared with living conifers and cycads, so perhaps the success of their Cretaceous ancestors was related to their rapid growth.