

**aphananthous**

'inconspicuous flower'

(pronounced: aff-fuh-NAN-thuss)

**anemophilous**

'wind-pollinated'

(pronounced: an-neh-MOFF-fill-us)

'**Aphananthous**' literally means 'inconspicuous flower'. We see this only if we are really observant, in many of our trees (maple, oak, elm and poplar), tropical foliage plants and grasses. Often, the only hint flowering has occurred is when seeds become evident, such as the cottony fluff of poplar and aspen, the hard acorn nuts of oaks or the winged samaras of maples. Plants with aphananthous flowers are '**anemophilous**', which in simpler terms means 'wind-pollinated'.



*The aphananthous flowers of Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa), arranged in male catkins.*  
Image by Elaine Rude

Corn, a grass family member, has tall spikes with many tiny flowers along its length. The inflorescence is quite noticeable, but the individual flowers are not. Corn is also an excellent example of a wind-pollinated grass and is why planting in blocks vs rows facilitates better pollination.

Wind pollination is considered an evolutionary advance as plants do not require insect pollinators nor huge energy investments to produce bigger flowers. With pollinators in decline, this gives aphananthous plants an advantage in a changing climate.