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- *Note that this is not a word for word transcript of the programme*

**Rosie:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Rosie and here with me today is Chris. Hello Chris!

**Chris:** Hi Rosie!

**Rosie:** Today we're going to talk about alien invaders in the Antarctic.

**Chris:** Alien invaders? Have aliens landed on Antarctica then? They should have chosen a more exciting place to land... like London!

**Rosie:** No, they're not aliens from outer space – or from another planet. We're talking about alien *plants* in Antarctica.

**Chris:** You mean plants growing in a place they shouldn't grow – outside their natural **habitat**?

**Rosie:** That's right. We're going to find out more in a minute, but first it's time for today's question, Chris. So are you ready?

**Chris:** I am.

**Rosie:** Right, OK. The word 'Antarctica' comes from Ancient Greek. Does it mean:

- a) white Arctic land
- b) southernmost continent
- c) opposite to the arctic

**Chris:** Well, I think I might go for a) white arctic land.

**Rosie:** We'll find out whether you're right or wrong at the end of the programme. But first let's talk about these alien plants. It's strange to think about Antarctica as a green continent, isn't it?

**Chris:** Yes, I thought it was mostly covered in ice. So are you saying plants are **flourishing** there? Do you think there might be forests there soon?

**Rosie:** I doubt it! But let's listen to a report by the BBC's environment correspondent Richard Black, who talks about what's happening. What phrase does he use to mean plants have started to grow?

### **BBC Producer**

The vast majority of Antarctica is covered by ice, but the bits that aren't are beginning to be covered in plants, particularly the Antarctic peninsula, the piece that runs up towards the southern tip of South America. It's seen rapid temperature rise in recent years which is why the plants are taking hold.

**Rosie:** So the reporter says that most of Antarctica is covered by ice, but there are parts which aren't.

**Chris:** Yes, and in the bits that don't have ice there are plants starting to grow – or taking hold. This is happening mostly in the Antarctica peninsula, which is close to the **tip** –or the very end- of South America.

**Rosie:** And did you hear the reason he gave for these plants growing?

**Chris:** Yes, the rise in temperature – so the continent is getting hotter, ice is melting, and the plants are growing. But where did the plants come from?

**Rosie:** Well, the **seeds** are being brought into Antarctica, but not by the wind. They're brought in by people.

**Chris:** So you mean people bring seeds with them and **plant** them in Antarctica?

**Rosie:** No, they don't plant them. They carry them on their clothes without realising it. Let's listen to the report which explains how scientists found out this is happening. How does the reporter describe searching scientists and tourists?

**BBC Producer**

Now an international research team has discovered how many of the seeds are getting there. As they describe in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences they frisked scientists and tourists visiting the white continent and found that on average each is carrying nearly ten seeds tucked away in boots and folds of clothing.

**Rosie:** That's incredible! Researchers frisked –or searched- scientists and tourists and found that on average each visitor was carrying nearly ten seeds tucked away –or hidden- in their boots and clothes.

**Chris:** Yes, I wonder how many seeds I'm carrying right now without realising it?

**Rosie:** Yes, although perhaps London isn't as green as some places the visitors travel to on their way to Antarctica.

**Chris:** That's true... Did you hear that the producer called Antarctica the white continent? Soon it might be called the green continent.

**Rosie:** Well, the plants aren't growing everywhere, but the continent is becoming a bit greener. The plants must look beautiful amongst all that white ice.

**Chris:** Yes, but it's a huge problem and scientists aren't very happy. Antarctica has a unique **ecology** which needs to be protected. Let's listen to the last part of the report. See if you can hear how many seeds are brought into Antarctica every year.

## BBC Producer

Altogether about seventy thousand seeds are being carried onto the continent each year. The researchers say that in time these species threaten to overwhelm Antarctica's ecology just as they have on islands offshore. They're advocating tighter checks on visitors. Even then, they say, increasing traffic to Antarctica, combined with climate change, means not all of the continent is going to stay white and pristine.

**Rosie:** Wow! Seventy thousand seeds are carried into Antarctica each year. This could overwhelm Antarctica's ecology, which means it could damage it.

**Chris:** So now they're advocating tighter checks on visitors. In most places visitors are searched for weapons or drugs, but in Antarctica they'll be searched for seeds!

**Rosie:** That's right. Well Chris, earlier in the programme I asked you a question and it's time to see if you answered correctly. I asked you where the word 'Antarctica' comes from. Was it:

- a) white Arctic land
- b) southernmost continent
- c) opposite to the arctic

**Chris:** And I said white Arctic land.

**Rosie:** And I'm afraid you were wrong! It was actually c) opposite to the Arctic. And did you know that the ice sheet that covers Antarctica contains 7 million cubic miles of ice – so that's 29 million cubic kilometres? So 90% of the world's total ice is in Antarctica!

**Chris:** Wow, that's a lot.

**Rosie:** Yes, it is. Chris, could you remind us of the vocabulary we heard today?

**Chris:**

invader

natural habitat

southernmost

flourishing

tip

frisk

tucked away

unique ecology

overwhelm

advocate

**Rosie:** Thank you Chris. That's all for today, but do join us again soon for more 6 Minute English! Bye for now!

**Chris:** Bye!

## Vocabulary and definitions

invader	someone/something that enters a place where it isn't wanted
habitat	the natural home of a plant or animal
southernmost	the place that is furthest south
flourishing	to grow well
tip	the pointed end of something
frisk	search
tucked away	hidden in something
ecology	the study of the relationship between organisms
overwhelm	to be too strong for something, to dominate
advocate	be in favour of

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[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/indepth/antarctic\\_aliens.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/indepth/antarctic_aliens.shtml)

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