§ 1. Over the past four hundred years, 450 types of plants and trees around the world have become extinct as a result of the combined effects of global warming, population growth, flooding and the fact that deserts are **advancing** in some regions at a rate of nearly four miles a year. Scientists estimate a quarter of the world's remaining 270,000 plant species will be under threat of extinction by 2050.

§ 2. In 1997, in an attempt to try to prevent the loss of plants, volunteers all over Britain began collecting seeds (*семена*). The seeds collected are now housed in the Millennium Seed Bank, which is expected to become the world's biggest seed bank and, apart from preserving almost all the plant life in Britain, it also aims to have saved the seeds of almost a tenth of the world's flowering plants in the next twenty years. If they are successful, the Millennium Seed Bank Project will be one of the largest international conservation projects ever undertaken.

§ 3. In order to achieve this aim, the Millennium Seed Bank has a team of scientists who travel to distant corners of the world to find and collect seeds. They also help local botanists to set up their own seed banks. They Spend a great deal of time negotiating with governments to allow them to collect the seeds and bring them back to Britain for storage in the Millennium Seed Bank.

§ 4. When these seeds arrive at the seed bank, they are sorted, cleaned and dried and then X-rayed to make sure that they haven't been damaged in any way that might stop them from growing into healthy plants. Finally, they are placed in ordinary glass jars and stored in three underground vaults (*хранилище*) at temperatures of −20 °C. Most plant Species have seeds that can be dried, frozen and stored for years and still grow into healthy plants. However, the seeds of Some Species cannot be dried, so they can't be stored in seed banks in the usual way. Roger Smith, head of the Millennium Seed Bank, explains that Scientists at the bank are already working on finding new ways of storing those seeds that cannot survive the drying and freezing process, and also on how to regenerate the seeds when they become extinct in their natural habitats. "At the moment, all we're doing is preserving these plants for the future. We won't have managed to conserve any species until we find the way to successfully regenerate them and grow new plants from them," points out Smith. "But at least this way, when the technology becomes available, and it will, we won't have lost everything."

§ 5. Dr Hugh Pritchard, head of research at the Millennium Seed Bank, says: "While it's true that many of the plants we preserve at the bank aren't useful at the moment, that doesn't mean they won't become useful in the future. Something like thirty per cent of the medicines we use today are based on products or chemicals which have been extracted from plants. So it's easy to see why we need to preserve the **diversity** of the earth's plant life for the future."

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The methods used in storing the seeds show that

1) Some species cannot be stored by regular means,
2) some of the plant species develop into healthy plants.
3) some seeds are damaged when X-rayed.