

In this BUMPER issue: GQT at Reading; practice questions; The Thymes interview with a Botanist; BUC alumni interview; art competition info, BUC25 calendar, limericks & more!

BUC 2024: RECORD TURNOUT!

BUC is an annual fun and friendly competition between teams of undergraduate & postgraduate students, streamed on YouTube to BUC's UK and global audience. A record twenty-eight teams have participated in BUC 2024 in two knock-out online rounds of multiple choice questions held on 14th and 21st February. The eight highest-scoring teams then went through to the Quarter Finals held on 28th February, answering a mixture of multiple choice and open, free answer, questions. At the end of an exciting nail-biting quarter final which included sudden death tie-breakers, the four teams with the highest scores who will compete in the Semi Finals on 28th August were University of Cambridge, RBG Kew, University of Reading and University of York.

CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL!

Dates

28 August: Semi Finals and Finals
Starts 14:00, University of Oxford

NB All BUC2024 rounds live-streamed! See our [YouTube channel!](#)

28-30 August: [Student Botany Festival](#) at University of Oxford open to all BUC 2024 contestants
Read more about BUC on our website!

<https://botanicaluniversitychallenge.co.uk/>

Follow us on Social media: X @BUCBotany
Instagram @botanicalunichallenge
Threads @botanicalunichallenge
Bluesky @bucbotany.bsky.social

The BUC 2024 Semi Final will be held on 28th August at the University of Oxford as well as being streamed on YouTube. All the questions will be open, free answer ones, and some will be based on live plants given to the teams to examine. The two teams with the highest scores will then go head-to-head in the Grand Final to find our Botanical University Challenge 2024 champions & runners up!

As usual, the questions will cover many aspects of Botany: plant ID, taxonomy & evolution, ecology & conservation, plant health, horticulture, agriculture & forestry, plants in culture & history amongst others. Although traditional ideas of Botany are the focus of the contest, the questions also include contemporary plant biochemistry, genetics, physiology and molecular biology.

The Second Student Botany Festival will be held immediately after the BUC final.

BUC24 RESULTS SO FAR: A WILD THYME!

A record twenty-eight teams entered Botanical University Challenge 2024. This included four first-timer institutions, Anglia Ruskin University, Oxford Brookes University, Harper Adams University and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. They all competed in Round 1 of multiple-choice questions, held on 14th February and including a round of St Valentine's plant themed questions. The questions were asked in a knowledgeable, but friendly manner by Sarah Dalrymple from Liverpool John Moores University. The 18 teams with the highest scores then went on to compete in Round 2 the following week.



BUC 2024 RESULTS SO FAR: A WILD THYME!

By *Meriel Jones, BUC Planning Team*

Round 2 of BUC 2024 was chaired by Micheline Sheehy Skeffington, President of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. She asked the teams a further 50 multiple-choice questions ranging from plant identification, books and foods to plant biochemistry and anatomy.

You reposted



The Tonyx @TonyxBarbershop · Feb 27

Replying to @BUCBotany @TheBotanics and @drmgoeswild
Moss Hysteria is a fantastic name

1

2

1

178

The 8 highest-scoring teams returned the following week for the quarter finals where the questions were asked by Leif Bersweden, author and nature communicator. The Quarter Finals started with multiple-choice questions followed by four rounds of free-answer questions where teams gave their answers verbally. This was a chance for the audience to get a feel for each team's approach and expertise. At the end of the Quarter Finals Plymouth and Reading were on identical scores! This could mean only one thing, a sudden death tie-breaker! Seven nail-biting MCQ tiebreakers later it was University of Reading that edged ahead and will join York, Cambridge and RBG Kew in the semi-finals in August!



Olly Lynch Milner @OL_LynchEco · Feb 21

Fun quiz today, challenging but in the good kind! Unfortunate that we didn't get to the QFinals. A great team we had for @uniofgalwayBPS! Great to see @MichelineShSk as the chair! Really broad questions, and makes me appreciate there's much more to botany than field botany!



Dr Karen Bacon and 2 others

The team from University of Galway bowed out in Round 2, but hugely enjoyed the experience.



Vikki Rose @Vikki56 · Feb 28

Quarter finals @BUCBotany here we come @ReadingBioSci



1

2

9

327

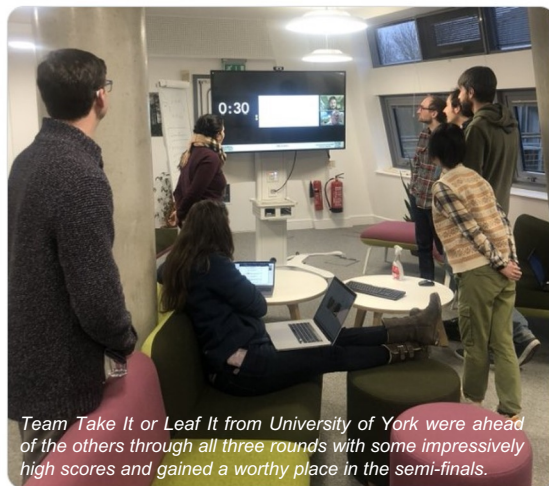
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After a tense series of tie-breaker questions, the team from University of Reading are through to the semi-finals, yay!



Leverhulme Centre for Anthropocene Biodiv @Anthropocene · Feb 28

Congratulations @BiologyatYork team Take It or Leaf It qualifying top in #BUC2024 and through to the semi-finals. Your #LCAB supporters were on their feet for that tense tiebreaker!



Team Take It or Leaf It from University of York were ahead of the others through all three rounds with some impressively high scores and gained a worthy place in the semi-finals.



Chris Bisson @chrisbisso · Feb 27

Replying to @BUCBotany and @drmgoeswild
My goodness, they are all brilliant!

We could not agree more, Chris!

GQT at UNI OF READING!



Above: An eager GQT audience at the University of Reading. Right: Dr M with James Wong. Credit: Alastair Culham

On the evening of Tuesday 26 March, Gardeners Question Time (GQT) was recorded at the University of Reading. Both Dr M and Alastair Culham, from the BUC Planning Team, attended and both had their questions selected by the chair Peter Gibbs and answered by the panel of Matt Biggs, Juliet Sargeant and James Wong. Alastair's question was about suitable plants for student rooms and Dr M asked a question about BUC 2024, especially appropriate as James Wong was the chair of the very first BUC held in 2016 AT RBG Kew! The GQT recording session was great fun and there was plenty (planty?!) of opportunity to chat to the chair and the enthusiastic and knowledgeable panel after the session. You can listen to the show broadcast on [BBC Radio 4 on Friday 12 April AT 3pm](#) and repeated Sunday 14 April and available afterwards on BBC sounds. You can follow GQT on Twitter @BBCGQT.

READ ALL ABOUT BUC 2024 TEAM EXPERIENCES!

By BUC24 student team members

We asked some newcomers to BUC to share their experiences. If you like what they say and you're a student interested in getting involved with BUC, get in touch!

Get ready for Moss Hysteria from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh!

Christopher Royce

We had just started the winter break for our MSc programme when I noticed an email from our Postgraduate Co-ordinator, Zoe Goodwin, asking if anyone was interested in entering a team into the 2024 Botanical University Challenge. I immediately messaged Alex Tianara and Connor Connolly-Moyls. Coincidentally, Alex had watched the 2023 BUC from his home in Indonesia. Andy Peppiette joined the



RBG Edinburgh Moss Hysteria

team shortly after and Hanjing Zhang agreed to join us as our reserve just hours before the deadline!

We decided to enter BUC because it sounded like a lot of fun, and it most certainly was. It was a chance to use the botanical knowledge we were gaining from our studies, spend time with our friends, and earn some really great prizes. We went into the competition without any preconceived notions of how successful we would be. We knew that British botany was going to be challenging for our team as four of us were from Asia or North America. We each picked topics of interest within botany and studied as much as we could before the competition.

It was an honour to be the first BUC team to represent RBGE and we hope we have set a bar that will be exceeded by future teams. We did not know if we would make it past the first round and yet we made it all the way to the quarter finals and we are all proud of this achievement! For anyone thinking of joining next year I cannot recommend it enough. You get to challenge yourself in a fun, supportive environment surrounded by fellow plant lovers, meet amazing people, and enjoy access to wonderful botanical events like the Oxford botany festival coming up in August!

Hello from Harper Adams University!

Tilly Reynolds and Matthew England



Our team, assembled by Dr. Andy Cherrill, were invited to take part in the Botanical University Challenge, even though none of us were botany specialists. Knowing little about the competition, we did some research and prepared as best we could, focusing on understanding the fundamentals of botany, particularly native plants and entomology, as they were most relevant to our interests.



As we progressed through the competition, we became more competitive, and we were determined to get to the second round. Succeeding in this aim was such a pleasant surprise, considering the knowledge of the other teams. Although we were disappointed not to advance further than the second round, we are still incredibly proud with what we have achieved. As next year's team will be a completely new set of students, we hope they will represent our university as we all had such a great time participating.



Harper Adams University - Harper Hemlocks

Welcome Oxford Brookes!

Oliver Carter and Andrew Lack



For a university without a botany course, the call to arms for BUC 2024 was a surprise, but Andrew Lack knew better and twisted the arms of us five doubtful students, suggesting avid gardener Oliver as captain. He rose to the challenge, thought up 'The Ragworts' as our team name and organised the team... then came to the session rather hungover! But we all settled down after the first round, and we realised the great potential of our team.

Yes, there were many guesses, but also much success picking apart questions and giving answers linking to our broader understanding. We achieved 23 points in the end, so not quite qualifying (25 was the bar), but the chance to partake in such an event made the points meaningless and we were happy to have a decent excuse not to work. Thank you BUC, you were trifflid, I mean t'riffic.



Oxford Brookes University - The Ragworts



THE THYMES INTERVIEW: Dr MARJORIE LUNDGREN



With Meriel Jones, BUC Planning Team

Originally from the USA, Dr Marjorie Lundgren is a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow and Senior Research Fellow in environmental physiology at Lancaster University.

The Thymes: How did you get into plants?

ML: I just always was. I grew up on a farm in New England, America. I would spend days wandering around outside with my sisters. Plants were just there in the background, and something I found fascinating.

The Thymes: You started with field based studies on plants at university but now have lab projects. What journey took you from the field to the lab?

ML: My introduction to plant research, while an undergraduate, was about invasive plants in New England. It used to be forest, was cleared for agriculture and now much is forest again. We found that land used in agriculture, regardless of its current state, was just covered with invasive plants. I did a further project on how deer browsed them, and contracted a bad case of Lyme disease. That was one reason I started rethinking being in the field!

After graduating I went straight into a PhD on phenotypic plasticity. This is when plants with exactly the same genetic background grow differently in different environments. I was trying to understand how that ability could influence evolution and studied plants in small ponds carved out by glaciers in Cape Cod. Doing the field work was lovely. However, after 3 years I had a crisis of confidence and thought I wasn't good enough for academia. So I quit, was awarded a Masters degree, and moved to Los Angeles!

I needed a job and first worked in a flower shop and then as a research assistant at the University of California in Los Angeles. It was a policy-type project on wetland mitigation to see if these activities actually worked; the short answer is, no, which was quite depressing. After that I worked in environmental consulting, doing a lot of report writing, rather than the field work I'd expected. I began to find it boring, so changed track again. I was employed by the plant-based Mendel Biotechnology Inc. to assess the physiology of transgenic plants by measuring gas exchange in leaves. Working as a research assistant was fine, but after a few years I reached the highest position in the company for someone without a PhD.



Dr Marjorie Lundgren is a Future Leaders Fellow at Lancaster University. Image credit: Lancaster University.

By now I was in my 30s and thinking about the rest of my life. With encouragement, I applied for PhD. programmes and was offered some, including at University of Sheffield in the UK. The shorter programme in the UK (3 – 4 years) as opposed to 5 – 7 years in the USA was attractive, despite the move to another country. The project was about diversity of photosynthesis and how it affected plant death. I read a lot of papers, including about the tropical grass *Alloteropsis semialata*. Papers from the 1980s said there were interesting features to its photosynthesis but did not follow this up. I switched my PhD to do this. It is a remarkable plant that uses several types of photosynthesis, the most diverse range so far known in one species. I identified that as well as C3 and C4 photosynthesis, some individuals use what is now called C2 photosynthesis, a stable intermediate between C3 and C4. After gaining my PhD in 2015, I continued to work with *Alloteropsis semialata* as a postdoc, focusing on the connection between leaf structure and function.

Then, I decided on another change. I returned to America, working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston and the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard in a project about the evolution of plant life history. Why are some plants annuals but others perennial? I was also applying for funding from fellowships to support my research. Then I was told about a lectureship at Lancaster University. I wasn't thinking about lectureships but was persuaded to apply. I was half-hearted about it, because I did not think I was ready. To my surprise I was quickly invited to the UK for an interview, and about 40 minutes after my interview I was offered the job! Then a few months later I heard that I'd also been awarded a fellowship.

Now settled at Lancaster, I have used fellowships and my new academic position to try to fully characterise C2 photosynthesis, especially parts that could be engineered into crop plants. I have also taken maternity leave to start a family.

The Thymes: Why are there multiple ways of photosynthesis?

ML: If you think about it, there are plants in nearly every nook and cranny of this planet, from deserts to rain-forest to British moorland. For plants to not only tolerate but thrive in such diverse environments they've had to evolve really clever mechanisms to take advantage of these environments.



Asclepias tuberosa

Image credit: Wikimedia Commons: Eric Hunt CC BY SA 4.0



The Thymes: You've worked industry and academia. Are there differences between them?

ML: Yes, definitely. One difference between academia and industry is money. Without sounding really shallow, I made much more money in biotechnology than in academia. It took years, even after getting my PhD, to come anywhere close.

Another is the work hours. In biotechnology I worked 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. You could not take your lab notebook home, for intellectual property reasons. Work and not working were clearly divided. It's pretty much nonstop in academia, constant never-ending work. That's a big difference.

However, in academia there is more freedom to follow your own research ideas. The biotech firm was paid to do specific research. You had to do that whether you thought it promising or not. In the end, I thought the trade-off related to freedom and creativity was worth the pay slash.

The Thymes: Is there much difference between working in academia in America and UK?

ML: Yes, that's one of the reasons I moved here. In the UK, people in academia work a lot, but in America people don't take holidays, they just work all the time. That's a blanket statement, and maybe working all the time when you love your job and are young is OK. However, when you are older, especially with commitment to a child, you can't do that. The UK is more relaxed. People actually take holidays. The work-life balance is much better in the UK.

The Thymes: What's your favourite plant?

ML: Definitely the grass *Alloteropsis semialata*. It's fascinating. I love it. If I had to give a backup, I love *Asclepias tuberosa*, butterfly weed. I remember thinking in my twenties that I'd like to name a child after a plant, but *Asclepias* isn't a good name for anyone. However, I do love those flowers. They're beautiful, and they're fascinating.

The Thymes: Thank you so much for talking with us.

Listen to the complete interview: [BUC YouTube Channel](#).



BLOGGING TO BEAT PLANT BLINDNESS

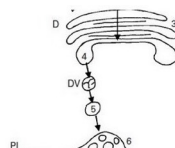
Nigel Chaffey

I am a Botanist. That fascination for plants has been fuelled by reading Botany at university, researching grass ligule function, postdoctoral study of the cytoskeleton and wood formation, teaching plant biology at Open University summer schools, and almost 20 years lecturing on botany at Bath Spa University. But, throughout that period the spectre of plant blindness [PB]* – which phenomenon combines both the inability of people to recognise plants in the environment, and a lack of appreciation of the importance of plants to people – has persisted.

PB doesn't afflict all people [my own students have surely been cured of this malaise(!)], but it's a major problem globally. And it's a very important problem. If people don't appreciate plants then they are unlikely to give them the protection and conservation they deserve, which – since, ultimately, we all depend upon plants for our survival – can be the end of civilisation as we know it. Plant blindness must therefore be tackled.

My new contribution to battling PB is *Plant Cuttings* [<https://plantcuttings.uk/>], a blog with the ambition of "Reducing plant blindness, one post at a time...". The posts provide insights into the amazingness of plants (and other photosynthetic organisms such as algae and cyanobacteria, as well as fungi – traditionally studied by botanists), and are intended to be understandable by the intelligent layperson. I hope the items will both inform and educate (and – occasionally – entertain). I'd encourage anybody who is interested in plants – and everybody else (because they need to know more about plants!) – to subscribe to the site (it's free to do so). [As one of the question-setting team for BUC, you may even get insights into topics for future contests...]

* NB, Kathryn Parsley proposes renaming PB as PAD, plant awareness disparity. Read more on this here <https://botany.one/2020/10/plant-blindness-eradicated/>



Under-appreciated plant parts: The grass ligule

The post describes the author's research on the grass ligule, focusing on its anatomical and functional complexity, including the passive exclusion of water and spores, and the potential active role in synthesizing and secreting a lubricating substance. The ligule's surprising cellular complexity and potential photosynthetic function are also explored. The...

March 15, 2024



Seed dispersal, on a wing and a prayer...

The post considers the work of Rubén Torices et al. on the role of "wings" on fruits of *Anacyclus clavatus* which challenges the assumption that they aid in dispersal by wind. Results show that the "wings" actually accelerate germination by aiding water absorption. Torices et al's paper demonstrates clear experimental...

March 8, 2024



Plants and people – and pharmaceuticals...

This post discusses the potential pharmaceutical uses of four plants – marijuana, navy beans, thunder-god vine, and willow. It explores their impact on weight gain, weight loss, cancer prevention, and killing viruses. Specifically, it delves into the effects of marijuana on appetite, celestrol's weight-loss potential, navy beans' impact on gut...

March 1, 2024

Examples of "Plant Cuttings" blogs by Nigel Chaffey



BUC ALUMNI: JORDAN BILSBORROW

Jordan Bilsborrow



A few years ago (2016!), I took part in the inaugural BUC representing the University of Reading. We were eventual winners that year and fortunately, a team colleague snatching a *Carex* identification round from me did not sabotage our chances! It has been great to see BUC grow from a handful of institutions at that time to the 28 teams taking part this year.

I had not long become a PhD student in 2016, researching the molecular variation of a *Narcissus* species complex and how this relates to species boundaries. I was fortunate enough to find and collect daffodils across their natural habitats in Spain, Portugal, and Morocco as part of my research. I finished my PhD towards the end of 2019 and was employed at the university working on projects centred on molecular systematics and identification of an eclectic range of plants such as *Cyclamen*, *Muscari*, *Drosera*, *Pilosocereus*, and, of course, more *Narcissus*. Alongside research, I also taught BSc and MSc modules involving plant identification and was the assistant curator for the herbarium at the University of Reading [See @RNGHerb on X-Twitter].



The victorious Reading team from BUC 2016 led by Jordan Bilsborrow

Around two years ago, I joined the Royal Horticultural Society as a Botanist focussing on plant identification. My role is based at the herbarium at Wisley and, in part, involves identifying our garden flora (as well as many non-garden plants) mostly from images and specimens. Alongside a small team, we answer around 5,000 plant identifications each year covering around 700 different genera, so we have to be generalists.



There are approximately 400,000 different taxa in UK gardens with many diverse ornamental groups such as dahlias with over 60,000 registered cultivars, daffodils with over 33,000, and let's not mention orchids. There are also the usual particularly challenging groups such as willows, pondweeds, etc. So, the challenge of identification is often far from a straightforward one. Especially as we try to identify plants out of context, without knowing the origin and they aren't growing in their habitat but in gardens. I am also becoming increasingly skilled at identifying plants from out-of-focus images. I was particularly interested in applying to the position as I knew that it would be challenging, that I would learn a lot of new plant groups, and ultimately that it would be rewarding. I am surely not the only one who experiences the euphoria of working out a plant identification after thinking about it for far too long.



Plant identification expert Jordan Bilsborrow at the RHS

One interesting aspect of my job is the surprising range of plant identification questions that I deal with. For example, I was asked to provide plant identifications for the leaf impressions left on tiles from the roof of a Roman Fort. I have also been asked to comment on the identification of plants in artwork from The National Gallery and The Courtauld Gallery. But the most rewarding was working with the Royal Mint to ensure that the botanical coins due to come into circulation were accurate. This highlights how varied botany is as a subject and one of the great parts of my job is not knowing what to expect next! [Not knowing what to expect next is definitely something all BUC contestants have to get used to! Ed.]



Botanical coins from the Royal Mint

MEET THE BUC 2024 SEMI-FINAL CHAIRS!



By Meriel Jones, BUC Planning Team

Announcing the chairs for the Botanical University Challenge semi-finals and finals, August 2024

We are delighted to introduce the botanical people who will be asking the questions in the semi-finals and finals of Botanical University Challenge 2024.

Dr Lucy Sutherland has been Director of the National Botanic Garden of Wales/Gardd Fotaneg Genedlaethol Cymru since October 2022. Lucy describes herself as an ecological and social scientist with a PhD. in botanic gardens management and policy. She is passionate about botanic gardens and how they can adapt and evolve to meet society's needs by bringing together sciences, arts and design in ways that connect and inspire communities with the botanical world.



Lucy was previously Director of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium in South Australia and has also held academic positions in Australia, the UK and Peru as well as with the Australian National Botanic Gardens and with Botanic Gardens Conservation International. As a result, she has been able to make significant contributions to plant conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development education in Australia and more widely internationally. Her publication on the role of botanic gardens, co-authored with Peter Wyse Jackson, was adopted by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity to guide the work of botanical institutions globally.

Check out the website: <https://botanicgarden.wales/>

Professor Lindsay Turnbull is a plant ecologist at the University of Oxford. Her Ph.D. concerned plant species co-existence in grasslands. The diversity among flowering plants today is one of the themes of her research. She has been involved in research on plant conservation, computer modelling of plant growth and the interactions between plants and insects. Lindsay has also undertaken research into strategies for restoration of natural plant communities.

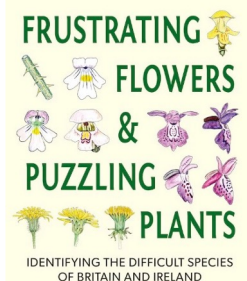


Lindsay is a botanical evangelist, encouraging students to appreciate the beauty and fascination of plants through botanical stories and getting students engaged in fieldwork. Her book, *Biolog: The Whole Story* (David Fickling Books) was published in 2023 and uses the story of life on Earth as the framework for an appealing and readable introduction to biological concepts.

Check out Lindsay's blog [Back Garden Biology](#)

Watch Lindsay's [interview](#) for Issue 6 of *The Thymes*

BUC 2024 PRIZES



We are very grateful to the organisations that have donated prizes for Botanical University Challenge 2024. Members of all the teams who reached Round 2 or beyond have (or will in due course) received publications from the Field Studies Council. In addition, all teams in the quarter final, semi final and final have been given a year's paperless student membership of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. Pelagic Publishing is providing a copy of the new book *Frustrating Flowers and Puzzling Plants* to each member of the winning team. Finally, the winning team will receive the Sid Thomas Trophy, inscribed with the team's name, to host for a year.

BUC 2024 Prizes

Field Studies Council FSC is proud to support BUC 2024 and offer prizes to all students getting to round two and beyond:

Quarter finals	YES	YES				
Semi finals	YES	YES	YES			
Runners up	YES	YES	YES	YES		
Champions	YES	YES		YES	YES	YES

LIMERICK AND TEAM NAME COMPETITIONS!

BUC Planning Team



Each year, BUC student teams have come up with such imaginative and amusing team names, and BUC 2024 was no exception with 28 great names! The full list is shown below on page 9, and you can [watch a video of all the teams here](#).

As in previous years, we held an online BUC 2024 Team Name Competition during the online rounds of BUC 2024, and the audience and anyone interested could vote for their favourite team name. The competition was very popular and 201 votes were recorded resulting in two clear winners. First place went to the University of Dundee's name "The Dundee Daylilys" with 83/210 votes, and second place going to University College Dublin's name "The House of the Rhizome Sun" with 70/210 votes. Congratulations to these two teams for these fab names!



Brand new for 2024 was the BUC 2024 Limerick Competition, an idea dreamed up by John Warren from the BUC Planning Team. As they registered for BUC 2024, student teams had the option to submit a botanical limerick, we set them off with a first line: "There was a young botanist from... [name of their institution] and no fewer than seventeen teams rose to the challenge and submitted their limericks. Members of the BUC Planning Team recorded the limericks especially for the competition and you can listen to and view all the limericks on the BUC YouTube channel [here](#).

These botanical limericks opened up a brand new audience competition and 141 votes were cast. All the limericks scored at least some votes but there were two clear winners. First place went again to The University of Dundee with 53/141 votes, and second place went to Anglia Ruskin University with 42/141 votes. Congratulations to these two teams for these fab limericks!

The winning limerick - University of Dundee

*There was a young botanist from Dundee
In gardens, they'd wander with glee
From the Magdalen Green
To the flora so serene
Dundee's botanical wonders they'd see!*

The runner up - Anglia Ruskin University

*There was a young botanist from Anglia
Whose clothes could not have been
spangler
When out in the Field
They could not be concealed
From a bull that had never been angrier*

PLEASE NOTE - PRIZES for the team name and limerick competitions will be awarded to these teams after the BUC 2024 finals at the 2nd Student Botany Festival on 28th August, at the University of Oxford.

BUC TASTER QUESTIONS



The BUC 2024 semi-finals and final will involve open questions, NOT multiple choice - so no MCQ in this issue's taster questions!

1. What is the name of the science that examines the relationship between people and fungi?
2. In soil profile descriptions what does O stand for in O horizon?
3. What monotypic order of Gymnosperms has four extinct families and one living family, with just one living species?
4. Ramsar sites are internationally protected wetlands. They are named after the city of Ramsar. In which country is Ramsar located?
5. What species is this?



BUC ART & PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2024!

Lucy Morley, Mayur Prag, Ellen Baker and Dr Lauren Baker



YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE: The BUC student art and photography competition 2024 is now live!

For **Photography**, the focus is on wild plants, and students can submit their entries under two categories: **Survivor** (for DSLR/professional cameras), and **Overlooked** (for smartphones).

For **Art**, this years categories are: **Realism, and Abstract.**

Thanks to the focus on wild plants, we are hoping these categories will really encourage participants to explore and hunt down beautiful and fascinating plant and fungi species in your local patch.

The judging panel will include botanical artist Dr Chris Thorogood (and photography judge TBC) and will choose the top two entries from each of the four categories to be awarded fabulous prizes! These winners will be announced in August 2024 at the second-ever BUC student botany festival in Oxford.

[Entries must be submitted using Google form](#), where you can also find additional information about the competition rules, the deadline for submission is 30th June 2024.

If you have any questions for us, just email to bucartphotocomp@gmail.com and we look forward to seeing your work!

For your inspiration you can check the winning entries from last years BUC 2023 Get Creative competition in *The Thymes* Issue #6 and [on the BUC YouTube Channel](#). The images below and top right here are other lovely entries



Some entries in the Photography category of the BUC 2023 Art Competition: Top LtoR: Jess Tate, Nicola Ibbotson, Max Moorcroft, bottom LtoR: Karla Cardenas, Aoife Embleton.



Some entries in the Fine Art category of the BUC 2023 Art Competition: Top LtoR: Amy Hawkins, Sophie Gooie, Tasmyiah Khanum, middle Erin Oldfield, bottom LtoR: Shanza Jehanger, Nicola Swinerton.

COMING SOON: BUC25 CALENDAR

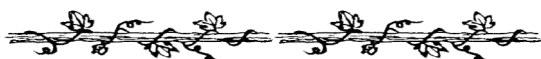
Yi Zhao



I recently took some souvenir ideas to Dr M, and among them he was most interested in the idea of a “*Thymes* calendar”, including different plants through the year and done in the style I have developed as graphics designed with *The Thymes*. So, I “dug up” some of my design elements from the past year or so for the newsletter, plus some early plant-themed drawings dating back to 2018 when I was an undergraduate working hard on exams. I also added drawings for more species so that each month would have one or two representative species. For example, *Galanthus nivalis* blooms in February, *Prunus mume*’s fruit matures in June, *Papaver* is related to Remembrance Day in November. Besides, each month has two representative colours that are relevant to the chosen species, and all illustrations in the calendar are as botanically accurate as possible. To make the calendar more BUC-related, I wrote some fun facts or questions about the chosen species. Moreover, I designed the calendar in a colouring book format, hoping that colouring can be de-stressing for the calendar owner when needed (such as during the exam period). Lastly, I hope the more you look into the calendar, the more hidden surprises (and smiles) you may discover!



Collage of illustrations for the forthcoming “*Thymes*” calendar by Yi Zhao



BUC 24 ROLL CALL!

BUC Planning Team

Twenty-eight plantastic teams participated in Botanical University Challenge 2024 and all of them created brilliant team names! Here is the full list:

University of Aberdeen – Aberdeen Alders
 Aberystwyth University – Go With The Phloem
 Anglia Ruskin University – Ruskin Roses
 University of Bristol – Sorbrainius bristolensis
 University of Cambridge – Backs Buttercups
 Durham University – Durham Rock Roses
 University of Dundee – Dundee Daylilys
 University of Edinburgh – Leaf, Laugh, Love
 Edge Hill University – Sedge Hill
 Eden Project University Centre – Rhizomaniacs
 University of Galway – The Plantaholic Anonymous
 Harper Adams University – Harper Hemlocks
 Imperial College London – Cereal Killers
 Lancaster University – Lancaster Floral Fanatics
 The University of Manchester – Aconite Acolytes
 Nottingham University
 University of Oxford – The Rogue Arums
 Oxford Brookes University – Ragworts
 University of Plymouth – Plymouth Pears
 University of Portsmouth – The Portatoes
 The University of Reading – Stamen To That
 Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh – Moss Hysteria
 Royal Botanic Gardens Kew – Stolon Victory
 Royal Horticultural Society- Rosemoor Rookies
 University of Southampton – Grow a pear
 Trinity College Dublin – The Trinity Tristerix
 University College Dublin – House of Rhizome Sun
 University of York – Take it or Leaf it



JOKE THYME!

How do you identify a Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)?

From its bark!



A dog in the dogwood
Cornus sericea

Got a botanical joke or pun? Send it to us!

ABOUT *The Thymes* TEAM

Layout and Design: Hattie Roberts (Lancaster University),
Graphics: Yi Zhao (University of Cambridge).
Editors: Hattie Roberts, Meriel Jones (University of Liverpool, retired), John Warren (Associate Tutor FSC), Jonathan Mitchley (University of Reading).

Special Thanks to Dr Lucy Sutherland, Professor Lindsay Turnbull, Dr Marjorie Lundgren, Dr Nigel Chaffey, Dr Lauren Baker and Dr Jordan Billsborrow.

Contribute to *The Thymes*

Got a botanical story or other content to contribute? Are you interested in editing or design? We need your skills and enthusiasm! Contact us:

botanicaluniversitychallenge@gmail.com

WANTED: Join *The Thymes* Team

Do you have an eye for detail and are a whizz at formatting, design, and layout? We would love to hear from you!

Enjoying *The Thymes*?

The *Thymes* Team are always pleased to get feedback from our readers, complete our short readers' survey [here](#) or via the QR code.



OUR BUC 2024 SPONSORS

We are very grateful to Gatsby Foundation and New Phytologist Foundation for financial support for BUC 2024 and to BSBI and FSC for in-kind support and for donating prizes. We are in discussion with a number of other individuals and organisations regarding potential funding contributions, a full list of our official BUC 2024 sponsors will be included in the next issue in July.



Date of Next Issue: July 2024

Answers to the BUC taster questions (NB All have featured in previous BUC contests):

1. Ethnomycology
2. Organic
3. Ginkgoales
4. Iran
5. Goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*