



In this issue: Teams in BUC semi-finals; BUC sponsors; Second Student Botany Festival; Interview with a Botanist; BUC Alumnus; Favourite Botany books; Journey into Botany; Floating ecosystems; My favourite plant; Plant puns

WHO WILL BRING 2024 BUC HOME?!

BUC is a fun, friendly and inclusive annual competition between teams of university students (BSc, MSc and PhD). It embraces the many aspects of botany: plant identification, ecology and conservation, plants in culture & history but also plant biochemistry, genetics, physiology and molecular biology.

The teams competing in the semi-finals are from the Universities of Cambridge, Reading and York and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. After rounds of free answer questions, including one involving live plants, we will have our winners and runners up in Botanical University Challenge 2024. **CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!**

A record number of 28 teams entered BUC 2024 and competed in knock-out rounds and the quarter-finals in February. The top 4 teams will compete in the semi-finals and grand final in front of a live audience at University of Oxford, also live-streamed from the BUC YouTube channel from 2pm on Wednesday 28th August - so join us live or online!

The Semi-finalist Teams:

Dates



28 August: Semi-Finals and Finals
Starts 14:00, University of Oxford
NB All BUC 2024 rounds live-streamed! See our [YouTube channel](#)



28-30 August: Student Botany Festival at University of Oxford

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





On the day of the competition, I felt quite nervous, knowing we were up against universities that specialise in botany. During the competition we were pretty consistent – until the last round of questions where we peaked as the questions involved knowledge on insects! We had fun but sadly didn't make it past the first heats. I'm looking forward to watching the finals in Oxford in August!



BUC 2024 SPONSORS GIVE BIG VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR MISSION!

A record 28 teams entered Botanical University Challenge this year including 4 teams from institutions entering BUC for the first time.

BUC is much more than a botany quiz and the accompanying student botany festival is designed to support our students in developing their field skills and employability prospects. A record ninety-four students have registered for the Oxford Student Botany Festival in August (a 50% increase on 2023), so we can safely say BUC 2024 is "sold out!".

BUC has had long term support from The Gatsby Foundation and New Phytologist Foundation. This year we have also raised funds from more than 30 additional sources, including over 15 participating universities and education institutions, more than 10 plant science and botanical related companies as well as several private donors. Full details of our supporters will be found in the Student Botany Festival Programme, BUC website and our social media.



GATSBY



New Phytologist



REPORTS FROM BUC TEAMS

University of Durham - Helena Brown

This year our Durham team all knew each other from our Botanic garden volunteering group, which has helped us make some great like-minded friends! Our team was made up of all second years (Aniko, Daisy, Ezra, Jamie, and Yuka) except for me (Helena) being the odd one out as a third year! We'll be honest; we went into BUC with little preparation, but lots of spirit and some very niche knowledge. When we realised we weren't progressing to the next round, we felt like we had let our reserves down, as they also had some great knowledge that they didn't get to show off! Thank you to G. Duke for cheering us on from the side-lines! (P.S. we're rooting for the York team, as Kian was a previous member of the volunteering group!).

Anglia Ruskin University - Louise Tovey

I decided to sign up to the BUC challenge after my lecturer Toby suggested putting a team together. He was very enthusiastic about the prospect of ARU competing, so I decided to try it out. To my excitement, and despite only having a limited knowledge of botany from things I have picked up during my Zoology degree, I made the team!

BUC CAREERS SESSIONS



Lauren Baker, Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum

One of the key objectives of Botanical University Challenge is to inspire and support the new generation of botanists.

There is a huge range of careers that botanically skilled students can branch into after their studies are complete. Our goal in the Oxford festival is to shine a light on some of these options giving students the chance to speak with people working in these diverse roles.

As part of the BUC 2024 Student Botany Festival, we have curated three sessions that focus on careers which will be held on Thursday 29th August.

The 'Next steps in Academia' session will be chaired by Paul Ashton, Professor of Botany at Edge Hill University and incoming President of BSBI. Paul is a dedicated teacher, short-listed in the PhD Supervisor of the Year category in the 2022 Postgrad Awards. Paul will speak about how to go beyond a PhD, identify suitable post-doctoral positions and how to source funding when needed. This informal session will allow you to ask questions specific to your situation in a friendly, relaxed setting.

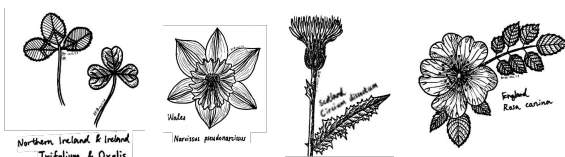
For the undergraduates interested in further study, the 'First steps in Academia' session will include two current PhD students, Sara Middleton and Oliver Spacey, and one recent graduate, Leif Bersweden. In this session they will describe the realities of undertaking Masters and PhD programmes and you will get the opportunity to ask questions about selecting PhD supervisors, choosing projects, training opportunities and questions about writing and publishing research work and writing books.

The 'Careers outside of Academia' session will be chaired by Mark Nason, Head of Professional Practice at CIEEM and there will be short talks from Alistair Wright, Crop Protection Scientist at the British Beet Research Organisation (BBRO), and Robbie Blackhall-Miles, Vascular Plant Officer at Plantlife International, who recently led the reintroduction of Rosy Saxifrage (*Saxifraga rosacea*) to a secret location in Wales.

In addition to these sessions, representatives from several companies and organisations will be in attendance at the Careers Showcase. These will include the New Phytologist Foundation, Gatsby Foundation, BSBI, RSK Biocensus, FPCR and Ecology by Design. You can drop in and speak with representatives on the Festival careers day, Thursday 29th August, and learn more about career opportunities in different plant-based sectors.

BUC 2024 PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

- Semi-finals and final rounds of BUC 2024
- The BUC Formal Dinner
- Ethnobotany, etymology and curatorial tours of Oxford Botanic Garden
- Hear the BUC Keynote Speaker 2024: Professor Alex Antonelli
'State of the World's Plants and Fungi 2023 Report'
- Conifer identification workshop
- Botanical illustration class
- Attend sessions on careers in and out of academia
- Art and Photography Competition
- Private drinks reception at Oxford Botanic Garden
- Speak with ecologists, publishers, researchers, charitable organisers and other potential future employers at the Careers Showcase





THE THYMES INTERVIEW: DR LAUREN BAKER



With Meriel Jones, BUC Planning Team

Lauren Baker studied at University of Nottingham and did her doctorate on the genetics of introgression in wheat. She is now the secondary education officer at Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum.



Dr Lauren Baker, secondary education officer at Oxford Botanic Garden. Image credit: Dr Lauren Baker

The Thymes: Welcome! It's wonderful to see you. You are now working at a botanic garden but you took part in tutoring and teaching before, during and after your studies at University of Nottingham. That's an interesting route into a career in science communication. However, the most unusual thing is that you are interested in plants. How did that come about?

LB: My interest in plants developed when I was at university. I started off being interested in animals and wanted to be a vet. I now find it really surprising, looking at school biology curricula and talking to students, how many of them, if they have a flair for biology, are pushed towards a career as either a doctor or a vet, as if that's the pinnacle of what you can do with biological knowledge.

So, I was interested in becoming a vet but my A-level year, for various personal reasons, was diabolical. And I didn't get the grades for any of the veterinary courses. I didn't want to resit a year, because mine was the last year that had the cheaper tuition fee. I was 17, and you're a little bit all over the place then and I ended up going to Nottingham, my backup choice, to do Applied Biology. I wanted to keep things very broad. The course was a good split between all of biology - animals, plants and microbes.

In my second year I was dozing at the back of a lecture theatre and the lecturer started talking about the biochemical controls that plants exert over pests and pathogens. I think it was about jasmonates putting off caterpillars that broke through my brain fog. It was the way he was talking about it, so passionate and interesting, and he brought this whole other world to my attention. There are these secret little wars and communication between plants and other organisms that are happening all the time, but we just don't pay attention. There was another lecture the following week about photosynthesis and again it caught my attention.

I hadn't thought about plants before, but I decided to swap degrees at that point. I moved from Applied Biology to Plant Sciences. And that was it! I was off into the world of plants. So, I hadn't chosen a career in plants from a young age. My father is a tyre salesman and my mother a part-time legal secretary. Their idea of a green space is a really well manicured lawn.

The Thymes: It's a bold move to change degree programme. And now you've moved into science communication, which is something that all scientists do to some extent, but doing it as a full time job is quite a thing. So what sort of journey have you had?

LB: Honestly, communication was always my favourite part. Being a scientist is very multidisciplinary. There's a huge diversity of skills that you need. You have to be good at your lab skills and good at your people skills and good at writing grants and writing papers. And my favourite bits of that role were always dealing with people and engaging audience members about the research I was doing.

My job now is, technically, education but without a doubt science communication is a really important part of that role. It involves digital engagement, outreach sessions on site, school sessions, all sorts of ways, which is good fun. I like that variation. I'll have a Year 7 group one day, and then a university lecture the next day. It's nice to flex your brain muscles in terms of how to explain concepts at the right level, and so that people don't feel put off.



There's this real barrier with Latin names which I experienced myself when I was younger. It's funny that kids will happily learn things like *Tyrannosaurus rex*, but if you ask them to learn plant names like *Artemisia*, that's too complicated! Of course common names, like sunflower, are fine! It's interesting to challenge those conceptions and try to get them thinking about things in a different way.

Science communication can be really powerful. I know some fantastic scientists that are doing amazing stuff, but not all are good at it. And if you can't get your message across to the public, about what you're doing and why it's important, I think it then becomes really challenging to bring them on the journey with you, and to get government funding or public backing for example.

I enjoy science communication with people coming to the garden, especially school groups. You'll always have a few that could not want to be there less. They arrive with a school group because they have had to come and they are determined not to engage. Sometimes you won't get them, and sometimes you will. And that is just the highlight of the role, really. When they leave, they're like well, that was actually, really fun and really interesting.

The Thymes: So I understand that you'll soon be writing regularly for the scientific journal [Annals of Botany](#). The journal started in 1887, but keeps up to date with spin-offs like [in silico Plants](#) and the weblog [Botany One](#), both re-engaging back with the scientists. What's that all about?

LB: My role with *Annals of Botany* is still very much under development. I am working with them to identify what we want, probably educational reviews.

The idea is to take people from the beginning of a subject towards recent advanced research within one article, with diagrams that explain some of the jargon or the chemical pathways that people need. Fields such as genetic markers and photosynthesis move on so quickly. Textbooks can't keep up. I hear this from university academics and researchers, especially in interdisciplinary research areas.

There's a growing demand for people to have a broader understanding about how processes interact with each other in the natural world. As an example, Rubisco could be your specialist area, but you quickly need to know about how climate change could influence it to get that broader picture for your own research.



We're still working out how we are going to make something different from a classic review article. The board of the journal is meeting at the [International Botanical Congress](#) in Madrid this year to discuss it. The idea is that some of the content will be suitable for the AAB Weblog [Botany One](#) as well, because that's a really great way to engage the public with some of this science.

The Thymes: That sounds really interesting. We'll look forward to reading when they appear. So finally, Lauren Baker, what is your favourite plant?

LB: You know, this was the question I was dreading the most, because I get asked this all the time, and it changes so frequently, depending on what mood I'm in. I always have a soft spot for ferns. I know they are a very large group and I can't pick a favourite, because I think they're all fabulous, whether it be the Maiden Hair ferns that everybody pops in their bathrooms, or the Tree ferns. There's ferns for every habitat. They're so glorious, and I really like the patterns of the sori on the underside of the fronds. I love the fact that ferns were around before and during the dinosaur era, and that they're still going.

I've remembered the fern that sticks with me the most, Bird's Nest ferns. When I was traveling, I remember seeing some absolutely massive specimens in Singapore and Malaysia growing in giant tropical trees, in their natural epiphytic state. And it was really, really lovely to see them festooning the branches everywhere.

The Thymes: Lauren Baker, thank you for telling us about your botanical life.

Listen to the whole interview on the BUC YouTube Channel here: <https://youtu.be/waS6aj6-LvA>



Bird's nest ferns in the tropical montane forest on Mt Manuocco, Atauro. credit: Wikimedia Commons

BUC ALUMNUS: SAM THOMAS



Sam Thomas, BSBI England Officer, tasked with increasing support for vice-county recorders across England and overcoming barriers to recording, data flow and mobilisation of data. Photo credit: BSBI.

It's been a fair few years since I was part of the aggressively bearded Aberystwyth University team for the inaugural 2016 BUC at Kew. Despite our patriotic leek mascot, we didn't quite clinch the win on the day - losing to an impressive and deserving Reading team. Nevertheless it was a great, if slightly rough and ready, experience. The day ended, appropriately, with question master James Wong and many of the teams in The Botanist pub round the corner from the gardens.



The 'aggressively bearded' Aberystwyth University BUC 2016 team. Photo credit: Sam Thomas

Since then I've continued with my botanical obsession including recording exactly 1914 vascular plant species and stable hybrids in the UK to date and nearly completing my quest to see every UK whitebeam (*Sorbus*) microspecies. I've also worked for some amazing organisations culminating with starting as England Officer for the BSBI in April 2024.

I worked for a couple of years as an ecological consultant in Oxfordshire before joining the Natural History Museum where I worked on urban ecology, a job spanning botany and entomology. After five years at NHM I couldn't resist applying for the job with the BSBI and was delighted to be offered the role. I'm still finding my feet but will be getting out and about meeting and supporting vice-county recorders and other botanists across England and, hopefully, spending plenty of time botanising myself. I've followed BUC in the years since 2016 and have been very impressed with the institution it has gone on to become.

ROOTING THROUGH READING: BOTANY BOOKS FOR FACT & FICTION ENTHUSIASTS

*Botany Book Reviews by Catherine Martinez,
University of Reading*



Featured Books: *Entangled Life*, *Mycelium Running*, and *The Hidden Life of Trees*.

Catherine Martinez, a third-year BSc Biological Sciences student at the University of Reading and an avid reader, shares her passion for botanical literature with *Thymes* readers.

As she prepares to embark on her PhD journey, Catherine offers her recommendations on must-read books that blend scientific insight with imaginative exploration. Dive into her curated list to enrich your understanding and appreciation of the botanical world.

Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures - Merlin Sheldrake

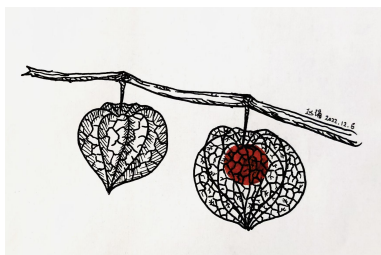
Entangled Life is a captivating read that will transform your perception of fungi. Sheldrake expertly intertwines scientific knowledge with personal anecdotes, leading readers through the fascinating realms of edible fungi, ecological roles, radical mycology, and psychedelics. The book's engaging narrative is complemented by inked illustrations and photographs, making it both informative and visually stimulating.

If you read one book this year, make it Entangled Life and embrace a new and hopeful fungal future.

Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World - Paul Stamets

For those inspired by Paul Stamets' [TED Talk](#), "6 Ways Mushrooms Can Save The World," this book is a natural follow-up. Stamets' enthusiasm for fungi shines through as he explores their diverse applications, from cancer treatments to environmental decontamination. With practical guides on culturing and harvesting, Mycelium Running is an accessible and joyful resource for anyone interested in the practical and transformative potential of mushrooms.

If you want to practically explore fungi or learn about pioneering mycologists, this book is a brilliant starting point.



Let's Become Fungal! Mycelial Teachings and the Arts - Yasmine Ostendorf-Rodríguez

This book delves beyond traditional mycology into the realms of art, philosophy, and social theory. Ostendorf-Rodríguez presents twelve fungal teachings through dialogues with indigenous wisdom keepers, artists, and activists. With its stunning illustrations and thought-provoking content, it offers a unique perspective on the intersection of science, art, and sociopolitics.

If you seek to explore the fusion of science, art, and radical empathy inspired by fungi, this book is a must-read.

Explore these selections to deepen your botanical knowledge and ignite your imagination.

What books would you share with fellow botanists? Why not contact us about them?!

ROOTS OF PASSION: HELENA BROWN'S JOURNEY INTO BOTANY

By Helena Brown, University of Durham

From childhood memories of building dens with twigs and leaves to a future in botany, Helena Brown reflects on her journey shaped by family, nature, and passion.



A childhood den built with twigs, leaves, and moss.

The Mint That Grew in My Nan's Garden

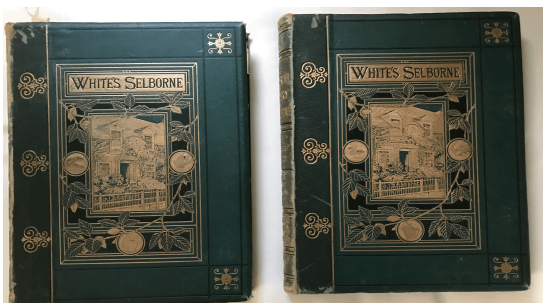
The mint from my Nan's garden is the best you've ever tasted, and paired perfectly with her homegrown potatoes. Watering the garden with my sister in summer and picking apples in autumn are some of my fondest memories. We brought some of that mint home, where it continues to thrive, just as my Nan's plants did. This familial care for plants, passed down from my Nan and also Auntie Pauline, who was renowned for her Geraniums, ignited my own passion for botany. Their pride and success in gardening, despite lacking formal botanical education, inspired me profoundly.



Helena Brown's grandmother's famous mint and Auntie Pauline's Geraniums.
Image credit: Helena Brown

A Legacy Rediscovered: My Nan's Botanical Influence

On my father's side, my other Nan's love for the countryside and her collection of natural history and botany books left a lasting impression on me. Joining the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) last year, a decision that has now led to studying at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh next year, I discovered that my Nan was also a BSBI member. It's a comforting link to my past, knowing that the magazines from her coffee tables are now a part of my own studies.



Botanical works from Helena's grandmother's collection.
Image credit: Helena Brown.

Looking Forward: Embracing the Future of Botany

As I look to the future, I'm excited about where botany will take me. I carry my memories and family legacy with pride and am grateful to be continuing this journey in the field of botany. It's clear that my passion for plants is deeply rooted in my family's influence and experiences.

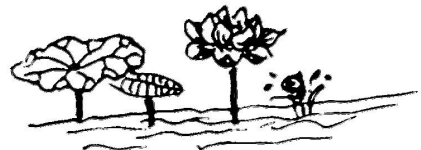
Helena's journey into botany is a testament to how personal history and family legacy can shape our professional paths.

FLOATING ECOSYSTEMS: EVALUATING THEIR VALUE IN URBAN FRESHWATER

*By Seb Stroud, Teaching Fellow,
University of Leeds*

The Concept of Floating Ecosystems

Floating ecosystems are innovative artificial platforms designed with buoyancy aids, planting media, and various plants. They are promoted as cost-effective solutions for improving water quality, bioremediation, and mitigating toxic algal blooms (Krivtsov *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, they are thought to support habitat creation, enhance connectivity, contribute to energy and food production, and offer aesthetic benefits (Exley *et al.*, 2021). However, much of the existing research has focused on their role in water quality remediation, with less emphasis on their impacts on biodiversity, aesthetics, and social value. It is crucial to validate these systems to understand their limitations and potential risks.



My PhD Research: A Comprehensive Survey

In my PhD research, I have been collaborating with various agencies to examine floating ecosystems across different cities, from Glasgow to London. My work involved sampling water quality, assessing public perceptions, and studying invertebrate and plant diversity. We used a rigorous before-after control-impact design to evaluate the benefits of installing floating ecosystems.



Floating ecosystem installation. Photo credit: Seb Stroud

Findings from the Research

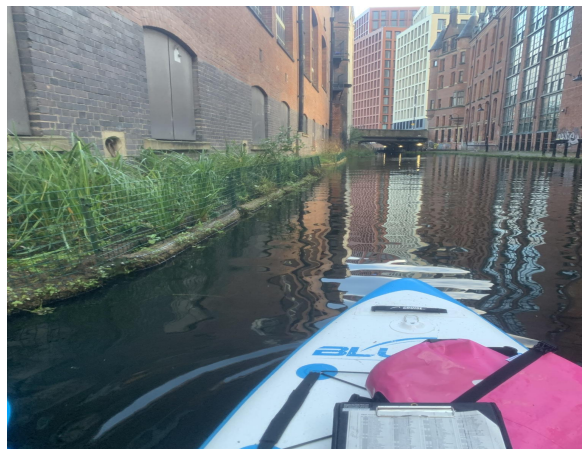
Water Quality

Do floating ecosystems improve water quality? Our results indicate no significant difference between control sites and floating ecosystems in terms of water quality. This is not surprising, given that urban freshwater pollution arises from various processes across catchment areas, and the limited vegetation of floating ecosystems does not significantly affect the heavily polluted waterways.

Social Dimensions

The social impacts of floating ecosystems were also intriguing. When comparing various dimensions of social value - such as biodiversity, wellness, and aesthetics - we found no significant differences between floating ecosystem sites and control sites.

Both types scored similarly highly, suggesting that the general wellness benefits of being near water might overshadow the specific impacts of floating ecosystems. Alternatively, the floating ecosystems might blend so seamlessly into the environment that their presence goes unnoticed by the public.



Water Quality Sampling. Photo credit: Seb Stroud

Biodiversity

In terms of biodiversity, floating ecosystems did enhance plant diversity compared to control sites. However, they did not significantly affect invertebrate diversity. This finding aligns with expectations, as providing additional plant habitats naturally improves plant biodiversity. Nevertheless, in more naturalized canals, there was no difference in invertebrate family richness between floating ecosystems and control sites.

Conclusion

The results are somewhat positive, but they highlight important considerations for using floating ecosystems as a cost-effective solution for enhancing biodiversity, water quality, and social value. Floating ecosystems do provide some benefits, particularly for plant biodiversity, but their impact on water quality is minimal. Overall, their broader benefits remain uncertain, although they may still offer value in the right context. (For References see next page).

Floating Ecosystems References:

Exley, G., Armstrong, A., Page, T., & Jones, I. D. (2021). Floating photovoltaics could mitigate climate change impacts on water body temperature and stratification. *Solar Energy*, 219, 24-33.

Krivtsov, V., Forbes, H., Birkinshaw, S., Olive, V., Chamberlain, D., Buckman, J., Yahr, R., Arthur, S., Christie, D., & Monteiro, Y. (2022). Ecosystem services provided by urban ponds and green spaces: A detailed study of a semi-natural site with global importance for research. *Blue-Green Systems*, 4, 1-23.

MY FAVOURITE PLANT: *SEMPERVIVUM*

By Izzy Beresford, University of Southampton

The Plant That Captured My Heart

For me, the standout plant is the *Sempervivum*, often called house leek, liveforever, or hens and chicks. These resilient plants form vibrant mats of spiraled, colorful rosettes, with each rosette being an individual plant.

A Childhood Fascination

I discovered Sempervivums when I was just eight years old. My mum, who ran a plant nursery, had a few *Sempervivums* tucked away in a forgotten corner of the greenhouse among a collection of alpine plants. There was something uniquely captivating about these plants that drew me in,

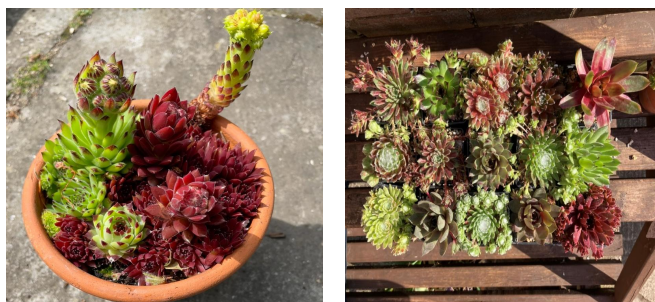


Vibrant *Sempervivum* rosettes full of life.. Photo Credit: Izzy Beresford

Growing Passion

Sempervivums are known for their hardiness and ease of care, making them the perfect plant for **10** beginners. Driven by my fascination, I began

collecting various *Sempervivum* varieties and selling propagated plants to fund my hobby. My collection grew over time, along with my pride and affection for these charming plants. Although I've moved away for university and no longer grow or sell them, I find joy in spotting *Sempervivums* wherever I go - cascading down walls, growing in pots, or covering rockeries. They remain a cherished reminder of home.



Sempervivum flowering and growing in pots. Photo Credit: Izzy Beresford

DID YOU KNOW?

Mythological Significance

The *Sempervivum* is an evergreen, rosette-forming succulent with a rich history. In Roman mythology, Sempervivums were revered as sacred to Jupiter. The rosette's round shape was thought to resemble Jupiter's face, and the flowers were likened to his beard, leading to the name 'beard of Jupiter.' Romans planted them on rooftops to protect their homes from Jupiter's thunder. The water stored in the leaves might have helped mitigate the impact of lightning strikes, reducing the risk of fire.

Medieval Beliefs

In medieval times, Sempervivums were believed to protect against extreme weather and ward off evil spirits. The resilience of these plants made them a symbol of good luck, and the term 'houseleek' comes from the Anglo-Saxon word 'leac,' meaning plant. Even today, Sempervivums are grown on roofs, with people hoping they will bring luck and prosperity. Regardless of their mystical properties, they certainly add beauty and character to any rooftop.

TEST YOUR FLORAL IQ: BUC TASTER QUESTIONS

Note: The BUC 2024 semi-finals and final will feature open-ended questions, not multiple-choice - prepare and revise accordingly!

1. What does the term 'caespitosa' mean?
2. In the British Isles flora, which genus contains species with the epithets *articulatus*, *effusus*, *conglomeratus* and *bufonius* ?
3. The fungicidal toxin persin is found in the leaves, bark, stems and fruit of which sub-tropical / tropical crop?
4. Identify the host of this leaf gall.



Answers: Page 12.

PLANTING A SMILE: DELIGHTFUL PUNS FOR THE BUC QUIZ

By Hannah Hall, University of Reading, BUC Planning Team

Orange You Glad We Made This List of Plant Puns?

In the bustling world of quiz competitions, every detail matters - even the introductory phase of questions. For Botanical University Challenge (BUC), I had the fun task of inputting questions into the Socrative quiz software. Amidst the serious business of quiz preparation, I had the playful idea to add a touch of botanical levity with some plant puns!

A Leafy Laugh

As teams logged into the quiz platform, we needed a holding question to keep everyone engaged while waiting for the quiz to start. This is where the concept of plant puns came from. These witty word plays not only provided a delightful diversion but also added charm to the quiz atmosphere, both for participants and the audience.



Hannah Hall in her leafy crown, bringing botanical charm to quiz prep. Photo credit: Hannah Hall

Pun Collection and Curation

Armed with a mix of original puns and ones sourced from online treasure troves, I set out to find the most amusing and botanically inspired jokes. A quick search for "plant puns" revealed a garden of gems (lettuce), and websites like Redbubble offered a wealth of puns ripe for adaptation.



Hannah Hall jotting down plant puns while pointing out her favorites. Photo credit: Hannah Hall

Pun-tastic Favorites

From "rooting" for the correct answer to "branching" out into new topics, I like to think these plant puns added a touch of humour to the quiz experience.

As teams enjoyed clever wordplays, tensions eased, and a sense of shared enjoyment blossomed. In the world of botanical quizzes, a little humour nurtures a vibrant and inclusive community.

Here are a few of my favorites:

- Don't be ranunculus!
- Put the petal to the metal!
- Lilac the ability to control myself!
- You're pretty fly for a cacti!
- You look absolutely radishing today!

JOKE THYME!

BUC Planning Team

What is the first thing you need when planting herbs? **Sage Advice!**



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

ABOUT *The Thymes* TEAM

Layout and Design: Hattie Roberts (Lancaster University), Helena Brown (Durham University), Rabinor Khurana (University of Dundee).

Graphics: Yi Zhao (University of Cambridge).

Editors: Hattie Roberts, Catherine Martinez (University of Reading), Vikki Rose (University of Reading), Izzy Beresford (University of Southampton), Meriel Jones (University of Liverpool, retired), John Warren (Associate Tutor FSC), Jonathan Mitchley (University of Reading).

Thanks to Dr Hattie Roberts for all her contributions to *The Thymes* as she moves forwards in her postdoctoral career and **welcome** to Helena and Rabinor, joining *The Thymes* Team with design & layout in this issue!

Special Thanks to Louise Tovey, Catherine Martinez, Izzy Beresford, Hannah Hall, Dr Lauren Baker, Seb Stroud and Dr Sam Thomas.

Contribute to *The Thymes* ?!

Got a botanical story or other content to contribute? Interested in editing or design? We need your skills and enthusiasm! Contact: 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.



Miss Pyrus

Inspired by flowers of the Pear (*Pyrus* sp.) by Yi Zhao who creates all the graphics for *The Thymes*.



Date of Next Issue: Autumn 2024

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

1. Tuft-like, clump-forming, dense
2. *Juncus*
3. *Persea americana* (Avocado)
4. *Rosa canina* (Dog rose)