

January 2025



President: Dale Sanders FRS, PhD

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“to further the application of biology to the production of food, materials, and energy, and for the maintenance and improvement of the earth’s environment”

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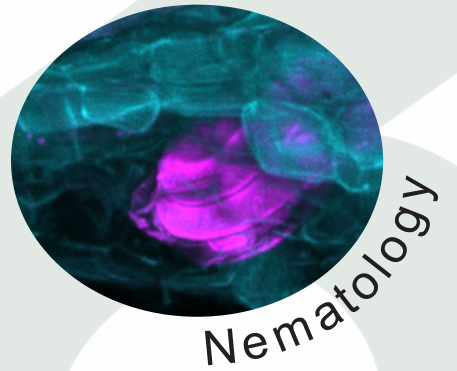
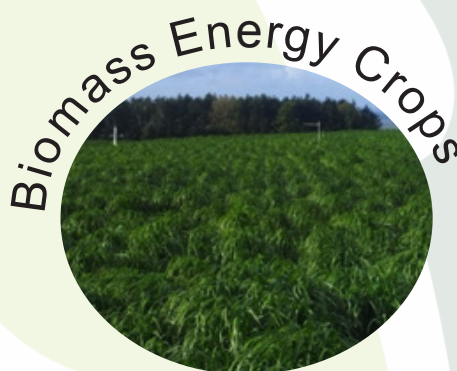
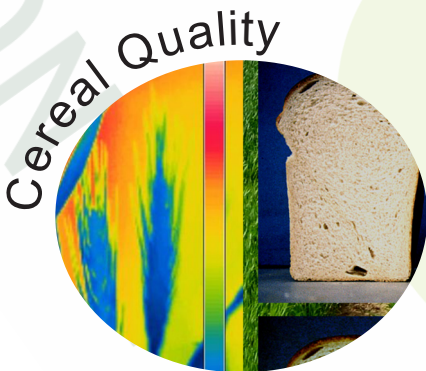
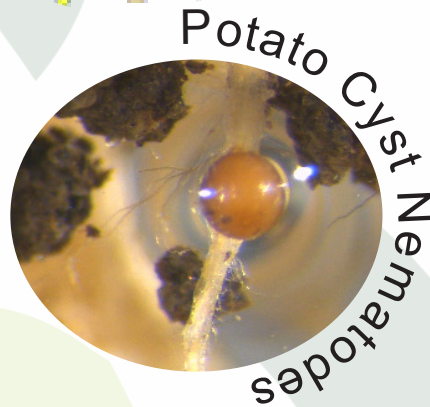
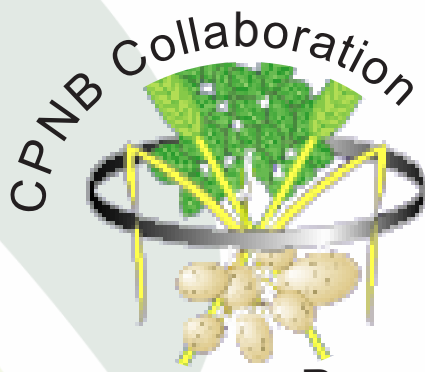
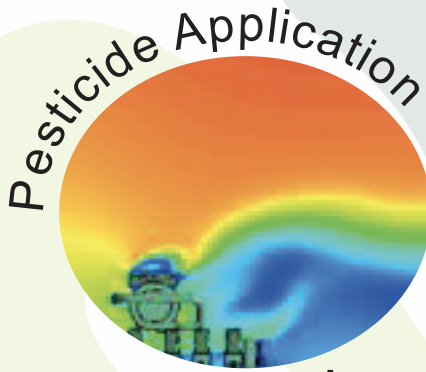
AAB Early Career Professional members (AAB ECP) eligible for FREE Online registration to *ANY* AAB-organised hybrid event, AAB ECP non-members pay a nominal fee (£5) for access and also gain free membership!



Association of Applied Biologists



The 2024 Conference Year



12 lead and co-organised events!
300 Speakers (47% Female)
620+ in-person, 294 online delegates



Plant Biology Education: Creating a Vision for the Future January 7-8 2025. Lancaster University

Dr Sonja Dunbar, University of Cambridge

Email: sdd29@cam.ac.uk

I really enjoyed the overall diversity of topics that the conference covered, but highlights for me included the two talks on field trips, as I lead one for our course. It was valuable to hear about ways to make field trips more accessible and facilitate disabled students in accessing these experiences, as well as how field trips can benefit a sense of belonging in students and how approachable they feel academics are. The conference also prompted me to think more about how to make Plant Science at my home institution more accessible to black undergraduates, and I hope to work with the Black in Plant Science network further to try and take this forward.

I particularly enjoyed the conference as a chance to share my own educational research with others in the field. I've been investigating ways to combat the often negative preconceptions that undergraduates bring to plant science content. I found that incorporating lecture breaks of related trivia or activities helped increase how enjoyable and memorable students found the content. It was great to chat to others that were looking at how to tackle this challenge in their own teaching! It was a real privilege to be selected for the poster prize, the icing on the cake of a fantastic two days!

I found it really inspiring to chat to other plant science educators and bounce ideas. I've been to other STEM HE conferences, but none could match the level of concentrated plant enthusiasm here! It was also really nice to forge new connections, as I'm the only teaching-focused academic in my Department, so being able to have people to reach out to in the future when I'm exploring new ideas in my teaching will be lovely. The organisers and speakers also really thought about facilitating connections by opting for round tables and often having table or whole-room discussions within the workshops. I felt I got to know a lot of people!



Sonja Dunbar and her poster. Image; Sonja Dunbar

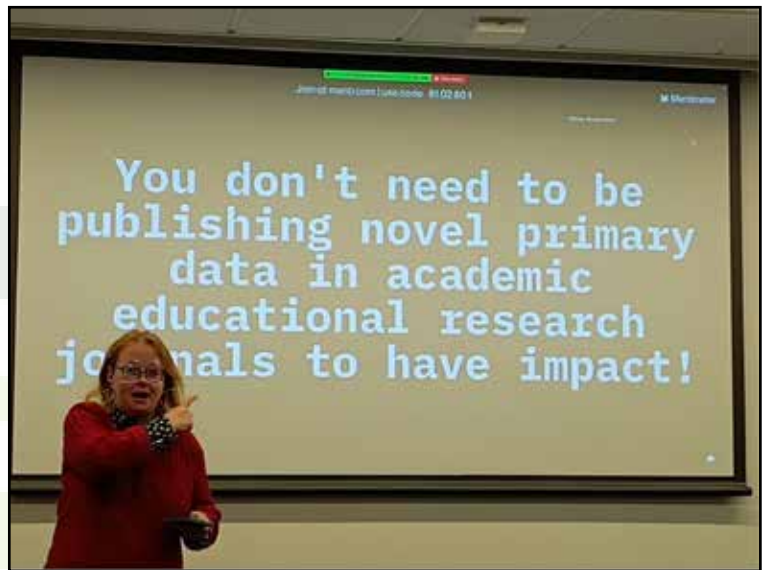
Acknowledgements: I'm incredibly grateful to the AAB for awarding me a travel grant to cover the costs of getting to and staying in Lancaster, and to Churchill College, University of Cambridge for supporting my registration costs.

Kelsey Byers, John Innes Centre (Norwich, UK)

Email: Kelsey.Byers@jic.ac.uk

I was recently able to attend the inaugural Plant Biology Education: Creating a Vision for the Future conference at Lancaster University (January 2025). This meeting was made possible by generous donations from AAB, the Society for Experimental Biology, and the Gatsby Foundation, as well as the efforts of a truly dedicated team of organizers, many of whom also presented workshops at the meeting. I particularly want to thank the funders for a travel grant which enabled me to attend the meeting! The meeting consisted of a single-stream series of talks and workshops on the latest in plant biology education, including hearing about the latest innovations in teaching and learning practice, how to support primary and secondary schools teaching in plant biology, relevant policy changes and consultations, and some tips on teaching the dreaded topic of photosynthesis!

Highlights included the workshop on planning the future of organized plant biology education in the UK as well as workshops and talks on inclusivity in plant science teaching (Dr. Andrea Paterlini and Dr. Liz Alvey, as well as a plenary by Dr. Yoselin Benitez Alfonso and a talk by Dr. Sara Lopez-Gomollon) and a stellar talk by Dr. Jeremy Pritchard that demonstrated a wonderful virtual reality resource for university and early years learners and instructors centred on a real-life research project on carbon dioxide enrichment in forests. I submitted an abstract for the meeting and was invited to speak during one of the oral presentation slots organized by Dr. Mary Williams from the American Society of Plant Biology. I spoke about the inclusion of disabled students in field experiences (“Creating accessible fieldwork: how to make field experiences inclusive of diverse bodies and minds”), which was well received and resulted in some very productive discussions later during the meeting. In case readers are curious about this topic, my slides can be found here: <https://plantpollinator.org/20250107-AccessibleFieldwork-PlantBioTeachingConf-shorter.pdf> and readers are welcome to reach out to me to discuss this and other talks on inclusion of disabled individuals in STEM via email: Kelsey.Byers@jic.ac.uk



Dr. Katharine Hubbard, wearing a red sweater and glasses, enthusiastically presents a workshop on educational research and publication. Katharine is standing in front of a slide with black background and white text, which reads “You don’t need to be publishing novel primary data in academic educational research journals to have impact!”

The meeting was very friendly and close-knit overall, and the roundtable format and included meals and coffee breaks really strengthened our networking as a community. Although most delegates attended in person, we had a lively set of attendees on Zoom who were also able to contribute to workshops as well as attend the talks and their discussions were invaluable. I felt that the organizers did a great job including both sets of attendees and was pleased to be able to use Zoom to generate autocaptions for my own accessibility needs. Although I don’t teach as much as many UK university staff (I am based at a research institute, so our teaching hours are limited compared to a university setting), I came away with many ideas about authentic assessment, Generative AI, use of visuals in teaching, laboratory practical and citizen science project design, teacher-student interactions, and the critical role that community networks play in the success of minoritized individuals in biology. Looking forward to future meetings! Thanks again to AAB and the other funders for making both the conference as well as my own attendance possible.

Dr Sara Lopez-Gomollon, University of Kent, UK

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Connecting with so many colleagues who share a passion for plant science education was truly inspiring. It was eye-opening to realize that, despite facing similar challenges, we can learn from one another's experiences and collaborate to overcome obstacles, ultimately enhancing the teaching experience for everyone.

This was my first time presenting educational material at a conference, rather than scientific results, which took me slightly out of my comfort zone. I shared my experience with Diversity Mark, a strategy implemented at the University of Kent to recognize modules that have been revised from an Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity (EID) perspective, ensuring an inclusive learning experience and access to diverse resources. Despite my initial uncertainty, the atmosphere was incredibly friendly and supportive, with attendees eager to learn. I received valuable feedback and interest from colleagues, highlighting how sharing resources and strategies can benefit everyone in the academic community.

Acknowledgements: I am thankful to the organisers for this wonderful meeting, and the funders for the travel award.

Enrique Lopez-Juez, Royal Holloway University of London

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The presentation on The UK Plant Science Strategy and Education by Steven Spoel. While known in part, the bigger picture of the Innovation process from UKRI, and of the role of Gatsby in HE, were eye opening. A number of examples of activities were inspiring. Perhaps would highlight BiFor and Jerry Pritchard. The activity towards schools of Gatsby (Dan Jenkins) was also exemplar. Provide a personal perspective on the meeting: While it was fantastic to see the enthusiasm of most of the audience, even when having to participate online, one did feel a little disappointed by the small number of plant science researchers (although a few were outstanding ones) attending. It is exceedingly important to highlight the value of education to research-focused colleagues, and to avoid a split between teaching-focused and grudgingly-teaching colleagues.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to AAB, Gatsby and the SEB for supporting the conference at large.



Sebastian Stroud, University of Leeds

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As an ECR, I am eager for the opportunity to engage in discussions, refine, and share my pedagogical practices. The collaborative environment at PBE the allowed for meaningful exchanges of ideas, development of my own pedagogic practice and opportunity to share my perspective from my early career position. I was excited to contribute to the manifesto for change, where we can promote transformations within the wider education community and raise the profile of plants in education.

Meeting educators from a variety of background and discipline was immensely valuable. The ability to share resources, perspectives, and successes was immensely rewarding, particularly so considering that during the busy academic year there can be limited opportunities to reflect on our practise as a teaming team. In particular, Katherine Hubbard's presentation on pedagogic research was most interesting, and I certainly will be activity sharing my teaching resources more widely.

Acknowledgements: I am most grateful to my institution and AAB for funding my conference fees, travel and accommodation. I would also like to thank my colleagues at Botanical University Challenge and their sponsors for their continued work for highlighting the value of botany to society.

Laura Turchi, University of Grenoble-Alpes (France)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lauraturchi/>, <https://bsky.app/profile/turchil.bsky.social>

At the beginning of January 2025 I had the opportunity to participate in the Plant Biology Education conference in Lancaster, UK. As an Italian postdoc working in France for many years, I was not familiar with the UK community of plant biologists, and even less so with that of plant biology educators.

When studying in multiple countries, and later teaching different types of courses during my PhD and postdoc, it had become apparent that education can take many shapes and use diverse methods. I had thus been curious about education for several years, but I had only ever been able to discuss it with my colleagues. Therefore, participating in the first Plant Biology Education conference was an incredible experience to discuss with people from different backgrounds. During the conference, I had the chance to meet other educators who are trying every day to make their teaching interesting for students, and to convey their passion for Plant Biology. At a time when we desperately need more people to understand the importance of plants in a changing world, this work is absolutely critical.

Unfortunately, in the field of Plant Biology we still have a long way to go to create a more diverse and inclusive environment. That is why I loved the talks by Kelsey Byers, who highlighted the current limitations in fieldwork accessibility, and by Yoselyn Benitez Alfonso, who introduced the Black in Plant Science network and showed the importance of community to improve diversity in our field. Another thing I particularly appreciated during this conference was the space reserved to group discussions during workshops. Such discussions made it easier to interact with new people, effortlessly overcoming a barrier I have experienced in the past as a young researcher participating in a conference where I did already know anyone. Plus, through discussions we all got to know each other better, and we shared the paths that had led us there, united in our interest and involvement in Plant Biology education despite very different backgrounds. Most importantly, group discussions were key to jointly define a manifesto of what we want to achieve as a community, which will hopefully be published shortly.

Finally, I was very happy to share my experience during the poster session. It gave me the chance to have yet more discussions with people from different backgrounds, and to get a better



Discussion sessions in full flow! Image; Geraint Parry

idea of how the UK higher education system works compared to the Italian and French ones. This allowed me to see that there are endless ways to teach plant biology, each with its own perks and disadvantages. I believe that knowing how other people communicate the same concepts in different ways can offer new perspectives and ideas to improve our own methods.

In addition to finding the conference amazing for networking and to get inspiration for new teaching methods, I also found it useful to meet many plant biology educators that operate outside of the traditional academic environment that I have always known. I did not realise the range of education opportunities in this field beyond academia, and it was incredible to talk to people about their own background, which was not always as straightforward as the ones I had been in contact with. I believe that examples of diverse experiences are particularly crucial today, when long-term opportunities in traditional academic environments are scarce despite the central role of plant biology to respond to a changing climate.

Therefore, I am deeply grateful to AAB and other societies which helped fund this experience, as I would not have been able to afford it my own. I would also like to acknowledge Christel Carles, who offered to cover registration fees for me. Finally, I would like to thank again all the Plant Biology Education participants, both in person and online, for making it such a wonderful and enriching experience.

Silvia Manrique Urpí, Polytechnic University of Valencia

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The Plant Biology Education Meeting, held at the University of Lancaster on the 7th and 8th of January 2025, was an inspiring and transformative experience that brought together educators and researchers committed to advancing plant science education. The full title of the meeting, “Plant Biology Education: Creating a Vision for the Future,” was no overstatement. The event went beyond showcasing innovative practices or discussing challenges and opportunities—it aimed to inspire the plant biology community to develop a shared vision for plant biology education that places diversity, inclusion, and meaningful approaches at its core while addressing global challenges related to the climate emergency.

The conference as a whole was incredibly useful and inspiring. The wide range of topics—from fostering diversity and inclusion to integrating cutting-edge technologies into education—provided a holistic perspective on plant science teaching. It left me feeling energized and more committed than ever to fostering inclusive and effective teaching practices. Another striking aspect of the meeting

was its focus on community building, which fostered a sense of connection and collaboration among participants.

Although all the talks were engaging and informative, my personal highlights include, first and foremost, the workshop on educational research and publishing led by Katharine Hubbard. Her insights into navigating the publishing process were invaluable, particularly her emphasis on identifying impactful topics and structuring manuscripts effectively. Her energy and enthusiasm for education were truly motivating and have already influenced my academic work. I loved her pragmatic “Buy-One Get-One-Free Opportunity” motto for publishing, which I am already applying!

Equally memorable was Beth Dyson’s presentation on the importance of authentic assessment, which aligns academic evaluation with real-world applications, ensuring students are prepared for their future careers. Dyson, who won the award for best talk, shared an exciting example of using podcasts as an assessment tool. This approach has inspired me to incorporate similar strategies into my own teaching.

Another standout moment was Kelsey Byers’ talk on creating inclusive field experiences. Byers shared her personal experience of conducting fieldwork while using a wheelchair, emphasizing that designing accessible fieldwork is not only possible but should be a central pillar of educational planning. Her message resonated deeply with me and reinforced the broader goal of education: to provide equal opportunities for all learners. Her focus on accessibility and inclusion highlighted the importance of fostering an educational environment that values diversity and ensures no one is left behind.

This meeting has forever changed how I approach teaching. I often dream of applying innovative learning and evaluation approaches, but at times I feel overoptimistic. Attending this meeting showed me real examples of people already implementing these approaches, making my aspirations feel achievable. It also gave me a supportive community to rely on whenever I need advice or help.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the entire organizing team. Special thanks go to Andrea Paterlini for his kindness and accessibility, which made my experience particularly smooth and enjoyable; Katharine Hubbard for her energy, creativity, and dedication to advancing plant science education, which inspired me throughout the event; and Geraint Parry for his assistance with the travel grant and help in planning my trip. I would also like to acknowledge my new “conference buddy,” Laura Turchi, another travel grant recipient. Together, we are putting Katharine’s “Buy-One Get-One-Free Opportunity” motto into practice by collaborating on report pieces about the conference.

In conclusion, the Plant Biology Education Meeting was a unique opportunity to learn, network, and reflect on the future of plant science education. It reinforced the importance of fostering diversity, authenticity, and innovation in teaching while encouraging the development of inclusive and effective educational practices. I look forward to applying the insights gained from this meeting to my own work and contributing to the broader goals of plant science education.

Abstract deadlines approaching!

Registrations Open!



Hosted online and at
Murcia, Spain 

International Advances in Plant Virology 2025 April 8th-11th 2025

Confirmed Speakers:

- **Svetlana Folimonova**, University of Florida, USA
- **Jun-min Li**, Ningbo University, China
- **Santiago Elena**, Instituto de Biología Integrativa de Sistemas, Spain
- **Emanuela Noris**, Istituto per la Protezione Sostenibile delle Piante, Italy
- **Hadrien Peyret**, John Innes Centre/ Nottingham University, UK
- **Sebastian Massart**, University of Liege
- **David Baulcombe**, University of Cambridge
- **Nataša Mehle**, National Institute of Biology, Slovenia.



Organised with the VIRTIGATION and
Euphresco VIRNET2 projects



Poster Abstract Submission closes February 28th!

aab

ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS
CROPPING AND THE ENVIRONMENT
SOIL AND ROOT BIOLOGY

Hosted online and at
University of Reading, UK

Legumes Science and Practice 3

June 3rd-4th 2025

Abstract Submission Open!

Abstract Submission open!



Abstract Submission open!

The logo for the Association of Applied Biologists (aab) features the lowercase letters 'aab' in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS
APPLIED TREE AND FOREST BIOLOGY

Hosted online and in
Carlisle, UK

Save the Date!

**Creating Canopies: Resilience, Adaptation
and Regenerative Approaches**

September 10th-11th 2025



Forestry Commission

More information coming soon!

The logo for the Association of Applied Biologists (aab) features the lowercase letters 'aab' in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS
CROPPING AND THE ENVIRONMENT
SOIL AND ROOT BIOLOGY

Hosted online and at the
University of York, UK

Roots to Regenerative Agriculture

November 18th-20th 2025

Abstract Submission Open!

Abstract Submission Open!



MONOGRAM

CEREALS & GRASSES RESEARCH NETWORK

MONOGRAM 2025

7th April – 10th April 2025

Venue: Medrus Suite, Penbryn, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, SY23 3BY Wales, UK
Key Dates

Registration Payment Deadline 31st January 2025

Abstract Submission Deadline 31st January 2025

We are pleased to announce that the 2025 Monogram conference will be hosted at Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK from April 7th to 10th, 2025 <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/ibers/news/events/monogram2025/>.
Registration and abstract submission are open with a deadline on 31st January, 2025.

The Monogram conference is a very successful conference series hosted annually that brings together scientists and plant breeders nationally and internationally working on cereals and grasses. The 2025 Monogram conference will include sessions on climate change, productivity, quality, the below ground environment, biotic interactions, crop diversification, advances in genomics and AI technologies. The conference will cover a broad range of fundamental and applied research topics on plant biology, genetics, genomics, molecular biology and physiology.

We have a list of renowned keynote speakers for the conference:

- Prof. Janneke Balk, JIC, UK, <https://www.jic.ac.uk/people/janneke-balk/>
- Dr. Simon Griffiths, John Innes Centre, UK <https://www.jic.ac.uk/people/simon-griffiths/>
- Dr. Pallavi Singh, University of Essex, <https://www.essex.ac.uk/people/SINGH38507/Pallavi-Singh>
- Dr. Catherine Howarth, IBERS, Aberystwyth University, <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/ibers/staff-profiles/listing/profile/cnh/>
- Dr. Lorna McAusland, University of Nottingham, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/biosciences/people/lorna.mcausland>
- Dr. Martin Mascher, IPK, <https://www.ipk-gatersleben.de/forschung/genbank/domestikationsgenomik>
- Dr Stéphanie Swarbreck, NIAB, <https://www.niab.com/about/people/dr-stéphanie-swarbreck>
- Prof. Ji Zhou, NIAB, <https://www.niab.com/about/people/professor-ji-zhou>
- Dr Jim Fouracre, University of Bristol, Rank Prize, <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/people/person/Jim-Fouracre-d5485b41-5777-476b-9a16-31838d6189ac/>

AAB SPONSORED TALK



All the other talks will be selected by the conference committee based on abstract submissions. We particularly encourage PhD and Early Career Researchers to submit abstracts.

The conference registration fee is £145 for students, £190 for non-students. The registration fee for the Gala Dinner is £55, for which places are limited, so book early **'first come, first served'**.

AAB are delighted to be providing travel grants for support the attendance of early career professionals!

Please apply at our usual travel grant application page!

<https://www.aab.org.uk/conferences/student-travel-grants/>



Annals of Applied Biology

Biosciences for Sustainability

Update from Annals of Applied Biology

Annals is owned by the Association of Applied Biologists and as such all the journal revenue returns to the scientific community through organisation of events in relevant topic areas.

The January 2025 edition of Annals is now available.

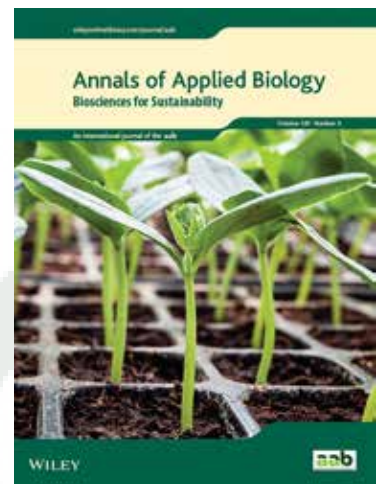
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17447348/2025/186/1>

Annals of Applied Biology introduces a new strapline!

#Openaccess Editorial

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/aab.12952>

Annals of Applied Biology will soon be rebranded with a new strapline of 'Biosciences for Sustainability'. This launch of the Annals Strapline aims to better represent the Aims and Scope of the journal and to also align it better with the owning society, the Association of Applied Biologists (AAB).



We look forward to receiving manuscripts over the coming years that will enhance the quality of the journal and develop closer links with the Association of Applied Biologists.

Apply to join 'Annals of Applied Biology' Editorial Advisor group.

During the the first months of 2025 AAB-owned 'Annals of Applied Biology' is changing it's Editorial system. We are shifting from the current 'Senior Editor-Associate Editor-Reviewer' system to a more streamlined 'Senior Editor- Reviewer' system.

As part of this change we are recruiting people to join a group of Annals 'Editorial Advisors'. Members of this group will be listed on the Annals website. We understand that many people contribute to the scientific community by reviewing research articles so we hope that by joining the Annals 'Editorial Advisors' that you will specifically undertake some of those reviews for a society-owned, not-for-profit journal. Editorial Advisors will be asked to review up to 3 Annals articles each year, so it won't be an onerous task.

Please contact AAB Executive Officer Geraint Parry (geraint@aab.org.uk) if you'd like to be considered as a member of the Editorial Advisor group. AAB Council and the Annals Editorial team will then assess whether you will be a good candidate for the role.

Launching a new Special Issues of Annals associated with an upcoming AAB meeting on 'Legumes in Science and Practice'

This special issue will be guest edited by Dr Emily Guest and Dr Charlotte White, who are part of the organising team for the upcoming meeting.

Submission deadline: November 30th 2025.



Annals of Applied Biology
Biosciences for Sustainability

Special Issue: Call for Papers

Legumes in Science and Practice

**Submission Deadline:
20 November 2025**

aab
ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

WILEY

Accepting submissions for Annals Special Issue on 'Agricultural Biotechnology in the Era of Genome Editing'

This special issue is guest edited by Dr Kubilay Yildirim and Dr Musa Kavas, who were part of the organising team for the AAB-PlantEd meeting on Plant Gene editing that took place in Samsun, Turkey in October 2024.

Submission deadline: March 1st 2025.



Annals of Applied Biology
An international journal of the **aab**

Announcing a Special Issue on:
**Agricultural Biotechnology
in the Era of Genomic Editing**

in association with the 5th AAB PlantEd Congress
29-31 October 2024

Paper Submission Deadline: 1 March 2025

Find Out More

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ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

WILEY



ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED BIOLOGISTS

Association of Applied Biologists Membership 2025

We are writing to encourage you to join AAB in 2025

Join a community of 1000 professionals who work across all areas of Applied Biology and work toward improving agricultural productivity!

AAB membership has significant financial benefits, especially for early career professionals (ECPs).

2025 Membership fees:

Regular members: £65

Early Career Professional members: £22

(anyone within 5 years of finishing full-time education; bachelor or graduate study including career breaks)

Retired members: £33.50

Membership benefits:

- **Reduced fees for ALL AAB events.** Regular members pay £100 and ECP members pay £50 **LESS** than equivalent non-members to attend AAB in-person events. ECP members can join events as an online delegate for free.
<https://www.aab.org.uk/events/>
- **20% discount on Article Publishing Charges** when publishing to *Plant Biotechnology Journal*
- **ECPs are eligible for travel grants** to any AAB event (up to £350)
- **All members are eligible for Carer grants** (up to £500)
- **Consideration for Fellowship of AAB (F Appl. Biol.)** after seven years of continuous membership
- **30% discount for online purchase** of 'Aspects of Applied Biology'
- **Reciprocal 50% reduction in membership fees** with the Royal Society of Biology, the Society of Experimental Biology (TBC) and British Society of Soil Science (TBC).
- **Invitation to contribute events and job opportunities** to the monthly AAB newsletter circulated to 3500+ scientists
- **Opportunity to join an AAB Specialist Group, which determine AAB activities.**
 - Applied Plant Pathology
 - Biocontrol and IPM
 - Food Systems
 - Nematology
 - PlantEd Gene Editing
 - Soil and Root Biology
 - Applied Tree and Forest Biology
 - Cropping and the Environment
 - Horticultural Quality and Food Loss
 - Pesticide Application
 - Plant Physiology and Crop Improvement
 - Virology

Professor Dale Sanders, AAB President

Dr Geraint Parry, AAB Executive Officer

www.aab.org.uk/membership

The AAB News Hub

A dedicated section for generic news content which may be of interest to our members and associates. These articles may range from current events, blogs, or discussion topics right the way through to some professionally published content. We are more than happy to receive additional content from our readers. If you come across an article or a newspaper column which you think would be of interest to our members please feel free to send it to

John (john@aab.org.uk)

[Glyphosate-resistant weeds have evolved in the UK for the first time](#) (New Scientist)

[Farms can install vertical solar panels without reducing crop yields](#) (New Scientist)

[Is a broken jet stream causing extreme weather that lasts longer?](#) (New Scientist)

[The extraordinary ways species control their own evolutionary fate](#) (New Scientist)

[Fertiliser can be made from human urine in just a few simple steps](#) (New Scientist)

[Building-sized asteroid has a small chance of hitting Earth in 2032](#) (New Scientist)

AAB Council Members



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