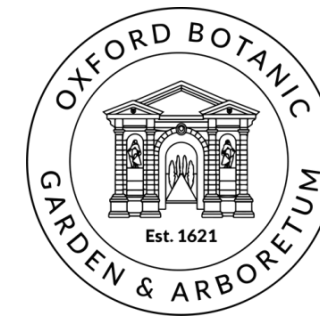


#33



# **BOTANICAL UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE: FOSTERING NURTURING AND INSPIRING THE SKILL BASE**

**DR M (JONATHAN MITCHLEY)**

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF FIELD BOTANY, UNIVERSITY OF READING**

**THANKS TO LAUREN BAKER (OBGA) FOR MUCH OF THE MATERIAL AND THE DESIGN**



# WHAT IS BUC?



An annual friendly competition and training event for UG and PG botanists and plant enthusiasts across UK and Ireland.

BUC core aims:

1. Fostering student botanical community
2. Nurturing botanical knowledge for students
3. Inspiring the new generation of botanists

BUC supports the BSBI strategic plan: Goal 1 (the training goal), including *“Trailblazing impactful ways of sharing stories and information to inspire a passion for plants”*

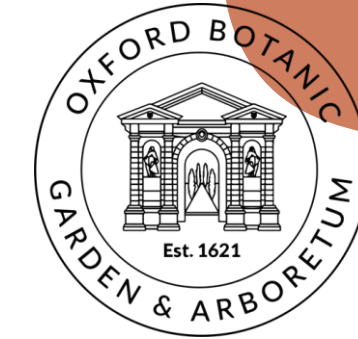




# 33 INSTITUTIONS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN BUC!



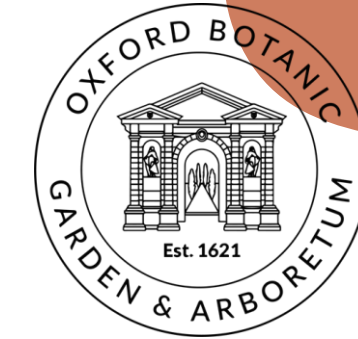
# BUC 2024



- A record 126 students in 28 teams took part in the online heats
- 90 students attended the free, in person semi-finals, finals and associated Student Botany Festival in Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum
- 18 academic and industry experts delivered talks in four sessions
- Keynote speaker: Professor Alex Antonelli, RBG Kew
- Careers Showcase and 10 training workshops



# BUC 2024 IMPACT



## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Careers Showcase
- Careers outside of Academia
- First steps in Academia

Feedback showed:

- 91% said BUC highlighted new career pathways for them.
- 97% said BUC helped them grow their professional network.
- 79% said they believed attending BUC improved their employability.

“I WAS ALWAYS WORRIED THERE WAS NO PLACE FOR PLANT BIOLOGISTS AND THE INDUSTRY JOBS WERE HARD TO FIND, BUT NOW I KNOW I WON'T HAVE TO SETTLE FOR JUST ANY OPTION AND THERE IS A PLACE FOR MY SKILLSET IN THE WORKFORCE. IT HAS EASED THAT ANXIETY FOR THE FUTURE.”



# BUC 2024 IMPACT

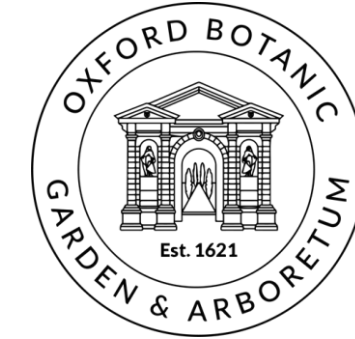
## FOSTERING A BOTANICAL COMMUNITY

Students were asked about any specific connections or collaborations that they'd formed through BUC 2024.

Answers showed the strong support network and professional network facilitated by BUC:

**"A MUST ATTEND OPPORTUNITY, IT GOES BEYOND IMAGINATION..."**

**I WOULD GREATLY ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO ATTEND BUC 2025 BECAUSE THESE EXTRA-CURRICULAR EVENTS ARE ESSENTIAL IN THIS DAY AND AGE WHEN JUST GETTING A DEGREE IS SELDOM ENOUGH TO SECURE A JOB. THESE ARE THE EXPERIENCES THAT WILL HELP STUDENTS STAND OUT FURTHER DOWN THE LINE. THEY ARE ALSO VALUABLE NETWORKING EXPERIENCES THAT ALLOW STUDENTS TO DISCOVER NEW OPPORTUNITIES, MAKE CONNECTIONS THAT COULD PROVE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE, GET TO KNOW FUTURE COLLEAGUES, AND LEARN ABOUT CAREER AND LEARNING OPTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT NEVER OTHERWISE DISCOVER. IT'S ALSO SO MUCH FUN! THOUGH THERE IS THE ELEMENT OF COMPETITION, IT VERY MUCH FEELS LIKE A COMMUNITY OF LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE ALL COMING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE A SHARED LOVE OF PLANTS AND BOTANY.**



**"I HAVE JOINED THE BUC IN NATURALIST PROJECT, AND WE HAVE A WHATSAPP GROUP WITH ALL THE STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED. I FEEL I CAN ASK FOR ADVICE OR CONNECT WITH THESE PEERS IN THE FUTURE FOR BOTANICAL-RELATED PROJECTS."**



# BUC 2024 IMPACT



## MOTIVATION AND EDUCATION

Feedback showed:

- 90% said participating in BUC 2024 increased the chance of them continuing to study / work in botanical related fields.
- 97% said BUC had increased their botanical knowledge.
- 85% said they gained skills at BUC they hadn't learned elsewhere.

**THIS SUMMER I HAD DOUBTS ABOUT A CAREER IN PLANTS AND STARTED CONSIDERING ANOTHER LONGSTANDING CAREER IDEA OF MEDICINE (PARTICULARLY MIDWIFERY). COMING OUT OF BUC, I'VE BEEN REASSURED NOT ONLY THAT PLANT SCIENCES IS A TRUE PASSION OF MINE, BUT THAT I'M LIKELY TO FIND A REWARDING JOB IN THE PLANT SCIENCES.**

**FANTASTIC TIME, THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO ORGANISED IT. I FOUND MY PASSION FOR PLANTS AT THESE CONFERENCES AND CANNOT EMPHASISE ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPOSING EARLY ACADEMICS TO THIS FIELD WHICH I BELIEVE IS UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE CURRENT CURRICULUM**



# LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



## BUC SOCIALS

- @BUCBotany
- @bucbotany.bsky.social
- @BotanicalUniChallenge

# WATCH THE BUC 2024 FINALS

## BUC 2024 SUMMARY VIDEO



## BUC NEWSLETTER



## BUC IN 3 WORDS



## Botanical University Challenge

Round 1 – 14<sup>th</sup> February 2pm Online  
 Round 2 – 21<sup>st</sup> February 2pm Online  
 Quarter Finals - 28<sup>th</sup> February 2pm Online  
 Semi-finals & Finals: 28<sup>th</sup> August 2pm The Queens College, Oxford

We are grateful for support from The Gatsby Foundation, New Physiologist Foundation, University of Oxford and others

An annual contest of botanical knowledge by students.

Teams from 28 Universities and Institutions 2024. After Round 1, 18 remained in the competition and they competed in the quarterfinal on 28



## BUC WEBSITE



# LOOKING FORWARD TO BUC 2025!



CHEERS TO BUC 2025!

# THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



University of  
Reading

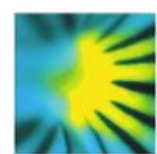


## GOLD LEVEL SPONSOR



GATSBY

## SILVER LEVEL SPONSORS



New Phytologist  
Foundation



## BRONZE LEVEL SPONSORS

UNIVERSITY OF READING  
FIELD STUDIES COUNCIL  
BSBI  
FRIENDS OF OXFORD BOTANIC  
GARDEN  
BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND  
ANNALS OF BOTANY COMPANY  
SOCIETY OF EXPERIMENTAL  
BIOLOGY  
RSK BIOCENSUS  
THE WILDFLOWER SOCIETY  
THE BOTANIST FOUNDATION  
ECOLOGY BY DESIGN  
GARDEN CENTRE ASSOCIATION  
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL  
UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY OF YORK  
ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN  
EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY  
EDEN PROJECT UNIVERSITY CENTRE  
CORNWALL COLLEGE  
FPCR  
BOTANIC GARDENS CONSERVATION  
INTERNATIONAL  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY  
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY  
ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY  
ST JOHNS COLLEGE, OXFORD  
THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN  
UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH  
ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY  
AND PRIVATE DONORS