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PlantSci Newsletter – a monthly round-up of plant science policy headlines and stories

April 2017

News

UKPSF news

[Plant Health Undergraduate Studentships – applications close in two days!](#)

Undergraduates can still apply to for a plant health studentship to take place over 8-10 weeks this summer. We've worked with plant scientists to create four excellent projects that address major plant health challenges identified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Selected students will be paid £300 per week.

Closes at 17:00 on 30 April 2017

Plant health and biosecurity

[The biosecurity front line](#) [*The Biologist* magazine]

In the wake of the ash dieback crisis, Rick Mumford explains a range of new techniques – from citizen science to 'sniffer' technology at airports – that could protect the UK from imported plant diseases.

[Hybrid 'super-slugs' are invading British gardens and we can't stop them](#)

Agriculture

Government statistics inadequate for the needs of agriculture

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee publishes its report into the agriculture and horticulture labour markets.

Gene editing opens doors to seedless fruit with no need for bees

Don't like the seeds in tomatoes? You might be pleased to know that seedless ones have been created by gene editing.

FACE and LEAF in talks to merge

A proposed merger between FACE (Farming & Countryside Education) and LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) has been announced.

Pesticides: with or without?

They get a bad press, but certain compounds are key to a future with safe, sufficient and affordable food, says the ECPA's Graeme Taylor.

Welsh Water launches free pesticide disposal scheme to protect drinking water quality

Welsh Water has launched a new initiative to encourage farmers, growers and landowners in targeted areas to consider 'smarter' ways of weed, pest and disease control that do not impact on people, water or wildlife.

Farms could slash pesticide use without losses, research reveals

Virtually all farms could significantly cut their pesticide use while still producing as much food, according to a major new study. The research also shows chemical treatments could be cut without affecting farm profits on over three-quarters of farms.

First study finds neonic pesticides in US drinking water

Advocacy Groups Ask for Ban on Common Pesticide

Advocacy organizations seeking to ban a pesticide linked to developmental disorders in children asked the courts Wednesday [5 April 2017] to intervene and order the Environmental Protection Agency [US] to ban the pesticide from food within 30 days and from all uses within 60 days if it cannot prove it is safe.

Food security

Research for a sustainable global food system

Feeding the growing human population is of course an absolute necessity. However an emphasis on food production at the lowest cost today means that, the global food system may be built on an unsustainable model i.e. one that depletes or degrades finite natural resources.

[Is Boston the next urban farming paradise?](#)

The city's healthy startup culture is contributing to Boston's rapidly growing reputation as a haven for organic food and urban farming initiatives.

Conservation

[England nature plan 'lacking policies'](#)

[UN Environment Annual Report Highlights 2016 Achievements](#)

[Conservation measures can increase the risk of bark-beetle damage](#)

[New £10 million fund to restore peatland](#)

A £10 million fund will help protect and restore England's iconic peatlands.

[Polish law change unleashes 'massacre' of trees](#)

New law allows private landowners to cut down any number of trees without applying for permission or even informing authorities.

[Road verges 'last refuge' for plants - conservation charity](#)

Other news

[Green care for mental health – new report on best practices in social prescribing](#)

We all know that spending time in nature is good for our minds and our bodies. There is now a plethora of research on the links between natural environments and human health (Defra recently published an evidence statement providing a broad overview of the of research). However, are we putting this knowledge into practice? A recent report commissioned by Natural England aims to provide a better understanding of nature-based interventions within social prescribing.

[A strong parliament will be nature's last line of defence during Brexit](#)

EU membership has given Britain vital environmental laws. Any changes to legislation must be done with full public scrutiny to protect us from exploitation.

Opportunities

[‘Botany Live’](#)

‘Botany Live’, an online science communication initiative for Fascination of Plants Day 2017 (FoPD), is being launched. For this, scientists, science communicators, educators and anyone who feels passionate about plants are being asked to live-stream a short peek into their lives. ‘Botany Live’ will take place from 18th – 21st May (Thursday – Sunday) 2017. This means that people will be able to capture activities during the week and normal work hours, as well as special FoPD events on the weekend. Aims are to engage new audiences that do not live near a University or Botanic Garden and would find it hard otherwise to participate in activities on the day.

Events

[Fascination of Plants Day 2017: Guided tour of Green Island Gardens](#)

21 May 2017

Our Fascination of Plants Day 2017 celebration will be a guided tour of Green Island Gardens with an opportunity to stay afterwards and explore the gardens further and access the café for lunch.

[State of the World's Plants Symposium 2017](#)

25 – 26 May 2017, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

In conjunction with the publication of a cutting-edge annual report, scientists and policymakers will gather at Kew for the 2nd international State of the World's Plants Symposium. An annual review of the major issues affecting plant diversity and abundance, Kew's State of the World's Plants report provides data on important indicator metrics to show us how plants are faring and how this is changing over time.

[New Breeding Technologies in the Plant Sciences](#)

7-8 July 2017, Gothenburg, Sweden

This event, which will be a satellite meeting of the SEB's annual main meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden (3–6 July), will be of great interest to plant and crop scientists who are invested in the future of gene editing both on a practical and regulatory level. We [SEB] will provide a forum for debate around the broader policy issues whilst include opportunities for in-depth discussion regarding the techniques required to make this technology work in your own research.

Utilising genetic resources in R&D

13 July 2017, York

This half day training event is an opportunity to gain an overview of the Nagoya Protocol and associated EU Regulations which have significant implications for the way R&D using certain plant and microbial materials is conducted. This event will include a variety of interactive learning approaches developed from a recent workshop “Sharing nature’s genetic resources – implementing the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing“.

Fourth International Horticulture Research Conference

16-19 July 2017, East Malling, Kent

The purpose of the conference is to bring together international researchers conducting basic research on horticultural crops, to showcase the latest research findings and to network with colleagues from around the world.

For the full events list, please see the [UKPSF website](#).

And finally...

Sci-fi forest tracks carbon impact

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