

## Plant Science Newsletter – a monthly round-up of policy headlines and stories

November 2021

Dear readers, the newsletter team will be taking a winter break before returning with the next edition in January 2022. In the meantime, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your readership.

This newsletter provides links to published news articles from a range of sources. Views or opinions presented are those of the original author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Royal Society of Biology.

### News and debate

#### Plant health and biosecurity

##### [Tree disease boundary extended across Devon and Cornwall](#)

BBC News reports that the tree pathogen *Phytophthora pluvialis*, discovered in woodland in Cornwall last month, has been found to have advanced into other parts of Cornwall and Devon.

##### [Forestry Commission acts on new tree disease in Cumbria](#)

The Government confirms the identification of the *Phytophthora pluvialis* pathogen in Cumbria, following earlier findings in south west England.

##### [Sour fig plant in Alderney causing 'environmental emergency'](#)

Alderney Wildlife Trust states that an invasive plant is causing an 'environmental emergency' in the Channel Islands, BBC News reports.

#### Agriculture

##### [Bees may take generations to recover from one exposure to insecticides](#)

The Guardian reports on a study that finds reduced reproduction and other negative impacts on performance of a species of solitary bee.

##### [Reducing ammonia emissions to improve air quality would be cost-effective](#)

A study finds action to reduce ammonia emissions through more efficient fertiliser use would be a cost-effective way to improve air quality and health.

### [British farmers call for government support to reach 'net-zero' agriculture](#)

The National Farmers' Union tells EURACTIV that government support is needed to meet its ambition to reach net zero in farming by 2040.

## Food security

### [Global food prices hit fresh 10-year high, UN says](#)

BBC News reports on the finding by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation that global food prices have hit the highest level in over a decade.

### [Record-high fertiliser prices in Australia could disrupt food supplies](#)

The global food supply could face disruption as high prices may cause farmers to ration use of fertiliser, The Guardian reports.

### [India's apple farmers count cost of climate crisis as snow decimates crops](#)

Kashmiri farmers lose half their harvest to early snows for third year, with fears for future of the region's orchards, The Guardian reports.

## Biodiversity and conservation

### [Environment Act becomes law](#)

Legislation that will protect and enhance our environment for future generations has now passed into UK law.

### [Soils to receive same legal status as air, water in first EU-wide soil health law](#)

The European Union's soil strategy has outlined plans for a soil health law by 2023, introducing a framework for assessment of European soils and requiring action against their degradation, EURACTIV reports.

### [Palm oil land grabs 'trashing' environment and displacing people](#)

The Guardian reports on a study warning that the growing rush for land is destroying ecosystems and disrupting lives to satisfy global demand for goods.

### [National Trust joins international call for peat product ban](#)

BBC News reports that The National Trust is calling on the government to ban peat being used in compost, as part of efforts to try to limit climate change.

## Forestry

### [COP26: World leaders promise to end deforestation by 2030](#)

A deal announced at the COP26 climate summit sees more than 100 world leaders promise to end and reverse deforestation by 2030, BBC News reports.

### [Brazil: Amazon sees worst deforestation levels in 15 years](#)

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest has hit its highest level in over 15 years, BBC News reports.

### [Group encourages tree planting alongside farming amid concerns for the future of rural communities](#)

As investment companies buy up farms across Wales for tree planting, there are calls for farmers to take up carbon offset opportunities themselves on unprofitable land, BBC News reports.

### [Forests can't handle all the net-zero emissions plans](#)

Researchers set out concerns that nature will not be able to store amount of carbon demanded by net zero pledges, in an article in The Conversation.

## Sustainability

### [How unlocking nature's power can help the UK step up its fight against climate change](#)

Researchers at the University of Oxford describe examples of nature-based solutions for climate change, and urge the Government to improve policy support, in an article in The Conversation.

### [Historic Kew Gardens collection to go digital in major boost for climate change research](#)

The Government announces funding to digitise Kew Gardens' collection of plant and fungal specimens.

### [Cape Town's Day Zero: 'We are axing trees to save water'](#)

Non-indigenous pine trees removed to reduce risk of drought in South African city.

## Other news

### [BBC previews landmark series The Green Planet at COP26 event in Glasgow](#)

Due to air in January 2022, the upcoming series follows Sir David Attenborough as he reveals how plants have adapted to different environments.

### [Public told to avoid highly poisonous plant washed up on Cumbria beaches](#)

Plants that look and smell like parsnips but are highly poisonous and potentially deadly have been washed up on beaches in Cumbria after the recent stormy weather, The Guardian reports.

## Opinion

### [Why the fate of our planet's environment depends on the state of its soil](#)

Duncan Cameron, Professor of Plant and Soil Biology at the University of Sheffield, calls for changes in farming practices to protect soils, in an article in The Conversation.

### [The urgency of eco-labelling in light of COP26](#)

In an article on its official blog, the Food Standards Agency's Chief Scientist, Robin May, explains why urgent progress is needed on unified eco-labelling system for food in the UK.

## Opportunities

### [STEM for BRITAIN 2022](#)

STEM for BRITAIN is a poster competition for early-stage researchers which is held in the Houses of Parliament. Applications are invited in five subject categories: Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Physics, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences and Chemistry. Finalists will be invited to an event in the Houses of Parliament where they will present their poster to Parliamentarians and the subject judges.

**Closes: 6 December 2021**

## Consultations

### [Consultation to reform the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board](#)

The Government is seeking views on proposals to help deliver a more efficient AHDB and value for money.

**Closes: 10 January 2022**

### [Diversity in STEM](#)

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee has launched an inquiry to investigate the extent of underrepresentation amongst those working in STEM and ask what policies the Government, industry, and academia could use to address it.

**Closes: 14 January 2022**

### [Commonly littered and problematic plastic items](#)

Defra is asking for evidence to help determine future single-use plastic policy.

**Closes: 12 February 2022**

### [Proposals to ban commonly littered single-use plastic items in England](#)

Defra wants your views on a plan to ban the supply of single-use plastic items and polystyrene food and drink containers.

**Closes: 12 February 2022**

## Events

### [Equality, Diversity, Inclusion in Science and Health Virtual Symposium 2021](#)

The EDIS Symposium 2021 is bringing together diverse voices within the science and health research sector. It is an opportunity to share progress of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work by EDIS members and the wider community and highlight future changes. The agenda and sessions will link the research system together through application of EDI concepts to research design, careers, and culture.

**8-9 December 2021**

### [The Academic Odyssey Series, speaker: Professor Ros Gleadow](#)

The Academic Odyssey Series, organised by the Global Plant Council, features first hand talks by researchers on their own experiences. On this occasion, Professor Ros Gleadow will share her academic journey, that started when she was 39 years old and decided to start her PhD.

**15 December 2021, 07:00-08:00 GMT**

### [BSPP2021 – Our Plants, Our Future \(OPOF\) - Joint conference from BSPP and the EFPP](#)

This major joint meeting, postponed from last year, will address scientific, practical and policy aspects of plant health. Inspired by the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), the meeting is aimed at a wide audience, from plant scientists to plant health practitioners. This will be a fantastic opportunity at a premier conference centre to meet and mingle with colleagues from across Europe. Early bird tickets at a reduced rate are available until 30th September. The call for abstracts for speakers and posters is also open until 31st October.

**Birmingham and online, 6-8 December 2021**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic most RSB events will continue to take place online and updated information will be made available on the [RSB events pages](#). We recommend also checking other external event webpages for updates and continuing to monitor and follow official advice.

## And finally...

### [Hard graft: backyard gardener claims world record for tree bearing 10 different fruits](#)

Nectarine, peach, plum and apricot among fruits borne by a tree that its Australian grower says provides message of 'peaceful coexistence', The Guardian reports.

### [Growing the future report](#)

*Growing the future* highlights to policymakers and others the excellence of plant science in the UK, and its importance to the biosciences, the economy, and society both at home and around the world. The report is available to download [here](#).

### **RSB Plant Science Group Royal Society of Biology**

1 Naoroji Street, London, WC1X 0GB  
[policy@rsb.org.uk](mailto:policy@rsb.org.uk)



[Follow us on Twitter](#)



[Join us on LinkedIn](#)

Please note that any views or opinions presented in this email are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Royal Society of Biology.

[Click here to unsubscribe from this publication](#)

Or, manage your subscription to this and to other RSB publications by logging into [mySociety](#) and choosing 'My Subscriptions' under 'Me and the RSB'.

---

© Royal Society of Biology 2021. Registered Charity Number: 277981  
1 Naoroji Street, London WC1X 0GB