



'Botany Live': a global online event to celebrate 'Fascination of Plants Day 2017'

What do you think of when you think of plants?

Plants are green or not green, small or tall, beautiful or irritating, rare or everywhere. Plants grow happily without us, but our lives depend on them. On "Fascination of Plants Day", 18th May 2017, we take a moment to appreciate plants for their diversity, beauty and importance in our lives. As scientists, we share what fascinates us about plants, and what drives our curiosity to delve deeper into their lives.

Launching 'Botany Live'

We want the whole world to know about the fascination of plants. Therefore, we are launching 'Botany Live', an online science communication initiative for [Fascination of Plants Day 2017](#) (FoPD). For this, we are asking scientists, science communicators, educators and anyone who feels passionate about plants to live-stream a short peek into their lives. 'Botany Live' will take place from 18th - 21st May (Thursday - Sunday) 2017. This means that you will be able to capture activities during the week and normal work hours, as well as special FoPD events on the weekend.

Our 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. Of course, we also want to reach existing followers of plant science social media accounts, and to expand the global reach of FoPD. Finally, this will be a great opportunity to explore live-streaming as new science communication tool. We are now looking for people to contribute, and to help us make plants 'go viral'!

How to participate!

You can participate in 'Botany Live' by running a live-stream session, using the free app '[Periscope](#)'. Live sessions could be a tour through a lab, herbarium, field site, a walk through a Botanic Garden, a behind-the-scenes tour of places that usually aren't open to the public, interviews, a reportage from a FoPD event, an 'experiment-along'... There is no limit to your creativity, but we recommend that your session should be short - between 5 and 15 minutes.

We will curate a central website (to be launched soon), at <http://botany.live>. On this site, we will promote the schedule of all announced live sessions in the run-up to the event, and will pull together all content posted under the hashtag #BotanyLive to be displayed on it. We will also provide an archive of all content as a legacy. For this, we will ask you to send us URLs of your video, if you uploaded it to your organisation's website or social media channel. Alternatively, we will be able to upload your video for you in a special 'Botany Live' YouTube channel.

Please email us at webmaster@aobblog.com for a link to the Google form, in which you can register your live-stream session.

The organising team

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- Alun Salt (@annbot)
- Mary Williams (@PlantTeaching)
- Ian Street (@IHStreet)

We would like to thank our sponsors:

- SEB+ (<http://www.sebiology.org/SEBplus>) and the SEB Plant Biology Section (<http://www.sebiology.org/plant-biology>) of the Society for Experimental Biology.
- AoB Blog (<http://www.aobblog.com/>) and Annals of Botany Company (<http://annalsofbotanycompany.co.uk>)
- Plantae (<http://plantae.org/>) and ASPB (<https://aspb.org/>)
- Oxford Brookes University (<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/>)
- The Quiet Branches (<https://thequietbranches.com/>)

'Botany Live' Guidance

Periscope

Periscope is a free app that allows you to live-stream an event using your smartphone camera and microphone. While Periscope has its own user base, you can share also your live session instantly to your Twitter and Facebook accounts. This means that your followers will immediately see that you are 'live' and will be able to join and watch. Live viewers can use the Periscope chat to message you and other viewers, comment on your session, ask questions, or leave 'hearts' if they like your live stream. Periscope records your video, so viewers will be able to view any sessions at a later point.

Periscope offers an extensive playlist of online video tutorials on its different functions:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3yGPMczpQoMv-Zxcl2XxnvBvxjP1jfy4>

Guidance for your live-stream session

- ❑ **Obtain permission from the venue or site manager** (e.g. lab manager) for your live-streaming session. Check if your 'public' venue is really 'public', or if you need permission, e.g. from the city or organisation in charge of the location.
- ❑ Live streaming requires a good internet connection, can you access a good wifi signal? Do you have a lot of mobile data available on your phone?
- ❑ Ask any volunteers who will appear in your video for a **written release form** (ask your press office or communications team, or ask us for a template). This is especially important when children are visible in the video, as no image materials of children must be posted online without their parents' permission.
- ❑ **What's in your background?**
 - ❑ Are there any health and safety issues that will be picked up by the audience (e.g. people working in labs without labcoats, unlabelled bottles...)?
 - ❑ Does it contain sensitive or confidential information (e.g. posters with unpublished findings)?

- ❑ Are there people in it who did not give their permission to be filmed? Does it distract from your session? Does it inadvertently give away your location?
- ❑ **Prepare a light-touch script** for your session. Introduce yourself and others, and start by explaining where you are and what the audience is going to see. To make your video accessible, keep a running commentary while filming, and describe what you see and what is happening.
- ❑ We found that it works especially well to **involve a second volunteer**, who has been briefed beforehand. This way, you can chat to each other, ask each other questions, the second person can act as guide to lead your audience through the activity, and you can swap the camera with each other. For example, while you are filming, your volunteer could approach an interactive FoPD stall, chat to the activity leaders about their stall, and then do the activities. Your volunteer might be a tour guide who already has a scripted tour in their repertoire, a lecturer who has a great plant identification activity, or a scientist who has done open days in the lab before.
- ❑ **Test your audio beforehand**, as wind noise, echoes or a noisy background might make it harder for the audience to understand what you are saying. A clip-on lapel microphone doesn't cost much and can make a big difference.
- ❑ Are there any **insurance, liability or ethical implications** that need to be addressed for your session?
- ❑ **Watch your language** - we will be promoting 'Botany Live' in schools, and your live-stream session should be suitable for all ages.
- ❑ Have you set your Periscope settings to **not delete your session after 24 hours**?