

# Gatsby Plant Science Summer School 2026

## About the summer school

The Gatsby Plant Science Summer School is a 5-day residential for UK undergraduates who are curious about plant science, but have not yet studied it in depth. The [Gatsby Plant Science Education Programme \(GPSEP\)](#), based at the University of Cambridge, runs the summer school.

[Overview of the Gatsby Plant Science Summer School](#)

## Dates and location

- **Dates:** Sunday 28 June – Thursday 2 July 2026
- **Location:** [The Hawkhills](#), Easingwold, York

## Contacts

Claire Pennycuick manages the Gatsby Plant Science Summer School and Yulia Lapko coordinates the programme.

If you have questions about the summer school, please email Yulia at [gpsep@botanic.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gpsep@botanic.cam.ac.uk).

## What you will experience

During this free week-long residential programme, you will:

- Discover the latest in plant science research
- Develop practical laboratory and research skills
- Explore future careers in plant science and biosciences
- Hear from leading scientists and researchers
- Take part in practical workshops and small-group discussions
- Meet academics, postgraduate researchers, and students from across the UK
- Build new friendships and professional connections in a welcoming and supportive environment

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*“It was one of the most enriching things I’ve done, and it was wonderful to learn for the sake of learning without exam pressure.”*

— GPSSS student, 2023

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## Programme highlights

Each morning begins with a lecture from a distinguished scientist, explaining how their research addresses real-world challenges. You will then:

- Discuss the lecture in small groups, led by an academic tutor
- Take part in a live question-and-answer session with the speaker

In the afternoons, you will participate in hands-on practical workshops, including:

- Live-cell imaging using confocal microscopy
- Exploring plant disease and pathology
- Understanding how computer modelling supports biological research

You will also receive careers mentoring on topics such as work experience, bursaries, studentships and building professional networks.

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*“Making connections with people happened so naturally, and the talks were fascinating — everyone was sad to leave.”*

— GPSSS student, 2024

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## Social connections

The Summer School also provides opportunities to meet biosciences students from across the UK. The environment is designed to be friendly, supportive and relaxed, encouraging discussion and collaboration.

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*“Life-changing. If you’re unsure of what you want to do, this experience will help shape your degree and academic career.”*

— GPSSS student, 2019

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## Funding, accommodation and travel

The programme is fully funded by The Gatsby Charitable Foundation. This includes:

- All teaching and laboratory equipment
- Accommodation in single en-suite rooms
- All meals during the week

You are only required to cover travel costs.

Travel grants of **up to £125** are available for students on low incomes.

## The 2026 programme

### Lectures and tutorials

Planned speakers include:

- [Julian Hibberd](#), University of Cambridge  
Understanding the evolution of C4 photosynthesis to inform crop improvement
- [Gail Taylor](#), University College London  
Plants as solutions for a sustainable future
- [Cristóbal Uauy](#), John Innes Centre  
Feeding 10 billion: food security, nutrition and sustainability
- [Katherine Denby](#), University of York  
Biological circuits: how plants make decisions
- [Charlotte Lusty](#), Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Global seedbanks: icons, resources or black holes

Additional speakers will be announced.

You can watch selected lectures from previous years on the [Gatsby Plant Science Education Programme YouTube channel](#).

### Practical workshops

#### Cell biology

Learn live-cell imaging techniques using fluorescent reporter proteins. You will use a research-grade confocal microscope and carry out computer-based image analysis.

You'll meet young researchers working in this fast-moving area and find out what excites them.

## Development

Explore how biomechanics determine how plants grow and respond to the environment. Learn to measure mechanical properties of plants and build a computational model to test how different mechanical properties can create different behaviours. Build your knowledge of techniques in contemporary science research and make cross-curricular links.

## Pathology

Investigate how pests and pathogens are monitored and controlled in the UK. Activities include field specimen collection and DNA testing using modern laboratory equipment. During the workshop, you'll speak to people working in the area about their experiences and what the work is really like.

## Plant identification and systematics

Whether you're a skilled ecologist or you can't tell a dandelion from a daffodil, this practical will get you looking at plant families in new ways. Develop confidence in identifying plant families using modern classification methods. The workshop includes both indoor learning and field practice.

## Careers support

Throughout the week, you will meet scientists and professionals from a wide range of scientific careers, including many you may not have heard of before. You will receive practical advice on:

- Career planning
- Research pathways
- Skills development and next steps

## Support and accessibility

Venue has accessible facilities, and individual needs can be discussed. Students can speak to their Gatsby Mentor about bursaries, access arrangements or any barriers to attend.

## Deepening engagement in plant science

Alongside the annual summer school, the Gatsby Plant Science Education Programme periodically develops additional activities to reach wider student audiences. In recent years, one example of such an initiative has been [Rootstock](#), a summer school

designed for plant enthusiastic bioscience students to delve deeper into the fascinating realm of plant science.

## Gatsby mentors

[Professor John Doonan](#) (Aberystwyth University)

[Dr Angharad Jones](#) (Cardiff University)

[Dr Miguel De Lucas](#) (Durham University)

[Dr Tolga Bozkurt](#) (Imperial College London)

[Dr Mike Roberts](#) (Lancaster University)

[Dr Patricia Lopez-Calcano](#) (Newcastle University)

[Professor Verena Kriechbaumer](#) (Oxford Brookes University)

[Professor Alessandra Devoto](#) (Royal Holloway University of London)

[Dr Gareth Norton](#) (University of Aberdeen)

[Dr Paula Kover](#) (University of Bath)

[Dr Daniel Gibbs](#) (University of Birmingham)

[Professor Jill Harrison](#) (University of Bristol)

[Professor Julian M. Hibberd](#) (University of Cambridge)

[Dr Piers Hemsley](#) (University of Dundee)

[Dr Ben Miller](#) (University of East Anglia)

[Dr Andrea Paterlini](#) (University of Edinburgh)

[Dr Pallavi Singh](#) (University of Essex)

[Dr Mike Deeks](#) (University of Exeter)

[Dr Eirini Kaiserli](#) (University of Glasgow)

[Dr Stefan Kepinski](#) (University of Leeds)

[Dr Sinéad Drea](#) (University of Leicester)

[Dr James Hartwell](#) (University of Liverpool)

[Dr Jon Pittman](#) (University of Manchester)

[Professor Zoe Wilson](#) (University of Nottingham)

[Dr Francesco Licausi](#) (University of Oxford)

[Dr Jonathan Mitchley](#) (University of Reading)

[Professor Katie Field](#) (University of Sheffield)

[Professor Matthew Terry](#) (University of Southampton)

[Professor Alex Jones](#) (University of Warwick)

[Dr Liz Rylott](#) (University of York)