



Welcome to this first edition of the Linnean Learning Update. This bi-monthly newsletter will be our new way of engaging with our community of educators, sharing insights into our projects and the natural world.



The theme for this update is on the surprisingly active realm of vegetation and our perceptions of this kingdom. Do plants feel? Do they fight and remember things? What relationships do we have with our leafy neighbours, and what is in their future here on Planet Earth?

## A 'New Portrait' Awarded

Inspired by the Society's [new acquisition](#) (right) by historic botanical artist John Tyley, we asked budding artists to create self-portraits alongside a plant that is meaningful to them.

We received many gorgeous portraits in a variety of styles from across the world, and the staff at the Society awarded 11-year-old-Emily from Hampshire 1st Place for the enigmatic portrait in the banner of this update. Congratulations to Emily!

The Linnean Society is home to over 2,400 portraits in various media but are often of people who are all... quite... similar, shall we say. The New Portrait Competition creates a space in our building for new, vibrant portraits that are celebrated and displayed for all visitors to see.

Click the link icon above to see the other winners, including from previous years, and stay tuned for the next year's competition!



## Are plants intelligent?

What value does the average person give to plants?

Imagine a world where plants were vocal. They groan openly as you walk down the street, casting shadows over them. They mutter when you leave your car engine running. They cry as you run through fields, and sing when the sun breaks through thick clouds.

These may seem like silly scenarios but plants do react to situations and they can communicate with each other and with animals too.

You can 'discover more' about plant intelligence through our dedicated blog and series of animations on the topic which present scientific studies as easy-to-digest stories and facts.



## Story time!

Carl Linnaeus realised that all plants were unique by using his observation skills and noticing that plants open and close at different times of the day. He then thought he could engineer a garden that tells the time.

'Flower Power Time' is a four-minute video covering some key themes: working scientifically (finding patterns), identifying structures of plants, exploring life cycles, and thinking about adaptations.

A transcript and a basic activity worksheet is available to download (link above).

## Activity suggestion

We are big fans of pressed plants, with our own precious collection dating back to the 1700s. Herbarium sheets capture a moment in time, but if you capture multiple 'moments' you can demonstrate how a plant changes over time.

Our activity suggestion is to collect multiple samples of the same plant as it springs to life & create a pressed plant gallery.



A guide to pressing plants (and other activities) is available in [Linnaeus at Home](#).

You might introduce your students to [Maria Sibylla Merian](#), an artist who was renowned for creating botanical artworks showing in one illustration how several insects go through metamorphosis.

## Special 'Plant' species

Many of you will have used our educational tool, [Special species](#), to generate new (realistic) animals, explore their possible characteristics, and name them scientifically... but have you ever used it for plants?

Plants use the same two-part naming system as animals do, so you could ask your students to create a plant rather than an animal. "Red-arm" could indicate a red stem, "teeth" could reference thorns. Send us your creations, and they might be featured on our dedicated instagram page, like this one:



*Emico flos*, aka the scented squirter, by Christina, age 17, Cardiff, UK.

This flower is adapted so it can squirt out a strong scent produced to attract bees to pollinate the flower to reproduce. It is found in warm tropical environments, and on the floors of rainforests.

## Final word

Climate change and biodiversity loss is happening across the kingdoms and the plant kingdom is no exception. We need to cherish our colourful friends, not only as providers of food, clothes and medicines, but as the facilitators to all life on Planet Earth.

Linnean Learning believes that we protect nature by understanding and valuing it, and so we provide resources, training opportunities, and grants to encourage the sustained engagement of young people with nature.

**Title of the upcoming issue:** Evolution, Everywhere

Follow us on [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [TikTok](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [Linnean News](#)

[www.linnean.org/learning](http://www.linnean.org/learning) Contact us: [learning@linnean.org](mailto:learning@linnean.org)