Lowering the Botanical Flag

Evidence tables: British university plant-science visibility, 1967-70 to 2026

Purpose. These tables provide the factual baseline for an article examining the loss of visible botanical identity in British universities over the span of one botanical career. The 1967-70 baseline is deliberately personal: 1967 was the year Michael Jackson entered the University of Southampton having explicitly chosen Botany (with Geography), and 1970 the year he moved to Birmingham for postgraduate study in plant genetic resources. The tables distinguish the existence of plant science from its *visibility* in departments and undergraduate degree titles.

Important methodological caution. The historical census is a census of institutions in our reconstruction with a Professor/Chair/Head explicitly identified with Botany or a closely allied plant-science field. It must not be described as '32 autonomous Departments of Botany': some institutions had Agricultural Botany, Plant Physiology, Plant Taxonomy or a School of Plant Biology, and several London colleges were separate institutions within the federal University of London.

Table 1. The 1967-70 university plant-science baseline

The historical reconstruction contains **32 distinct institutions/colleges**; multiple simultaneous or successive chairs are retained below. London colleges are shown separately because they were then distinct colleges of the federal University of London.

Institution	Professor / leader	Chair / role	Chronology / note
Aberdeen	P. E. Weatherley	Regius Professor of Botany	1959-81; in post throughout 1967-70
Aberystwyth	Peter F. Wareing	Professor of Botany	In post throughout 1967-70
Aberystwyth	Hubert (Hugh) Rees	Professor / Head of Agricultural Botany	Personal chair and Head from 1968
Bangor	John L. Harper	Professor of Agricultural Botany; Head, School of Plant Biology	School of Plant Biology formed 1967
Birmingham	J. Heslop-Harrison / J. G. Hawkes	Mason Professor of Botany	Heslop-Harrison to 1967; Hawkes from 1967
Bristol	E. W. Yemm	Melville Wills Professor of Botany	1955-74
Cambridge	Sir Harry Godwin / Percy W. Brian	Professor of Botany	Godwin to 1968; Brian from 1968
Cardiff	Geoffrey F. Asprey	Professor / Head of Botany	1955-73
Edinburgh	Robert Brown	Professor of Botany	1958-77
Exeter	John Caldwell / John Webster	Professor of Botany / biological-sciences successor	Botany/Zoology reorganisation in 1969
Glasgow	P. W. Brian / J. H. Burnett / M. B. Wilkins	Regius Professor of Botany	Successive holders 1963-70
Hull	Noel F. Robertson	Professor of Botany	From 1959
Leeds	Irene Manton / Harold W. Woolhouse	Professor of Botany	Manton to 1969; Woolhouse from 1969
Leeds	John Henry Western	Professor of Agricultural Botany	c.1960-71
Leeds	R. D. Preston	Professor of Plant Biophysics	From 1962
Leicester	T. G. Tutin / H. E. Street	Botany / Plant Taxonomy; Professor of Botany	Reorganisation from 1967
Liverpool	A. D. (Tony) Bradshaw	Professor of Botany	From 1968
Manchester	David H. Valentine	Harrison Professor of Botany	1966-79
Manchester	John Colhoun	Barker Professor of Cryptogamic Botany	1960-80
Newcastle upon Tyne	John H. Burnett	Professor of Botany	1961-68; immediate succession needs calendar verification
Nottingham	C. G. C. Chesters / E. C. Cocking	Professor of Botany	Chesters to 1969; Cocking from 1969
Oxford	C. D. Darlington	Sherardian Professor of Botany	Throughout 1967-70
Queen's Belfast	R. K. McKee / John S. Pate	Plant pathology / Professor of Plant Physiology	Pate personal chair from 1970; McKee wording needs verification
Reading	T. M. Harris / Vernon H. Heywood	Professor of Botany	Harris to 1968; Heywood from 1968
Reading	A. H. Bunting	Professor of Agricultural Botany	In post during period
Sheffield	A. R. Clapham / A. J. Willis	Professor of Botany	Clapham to 1969; Willis from 1969
Southampton	Stephen H. Crowdy	Professor / Head of Botany	Throughout 1967-70

Institution	Professor / leader	Chair / role	Chronology / note
St Andrews	James A. Macdonald	Professor of Botany	From 1961
Sussex	James F. Sutcliffe	Professor of Botany	From 1965
Swansea	Philip J. Syrett	Professor of Botany	From 1967
University College London	Dan Lewis	Quain Professor of Botany	1958-78
Bedford College, London	Leslie J. Audus	Hildred Carlile Professor of Botany	Throughout 1967-70
Birkbeck College, London	C. Terence Ingold	Professor of Botany	1944-72
Imperial College London	C. P. Whittingham	Professor of Plant Physiology	1964-71
Queen Mary College, London	Alan Bevan	Professor / Head of Botany	From 1964
Royal Holloway College, London	Karl Wilson	Professor of Botany	Throughout 1967-70
Westfield College, London	G. E. (Tony) Fogg	Professor of Botany	1960-71

Historical source: working consolidated reconstruction, *British Plant Science, 1967-1970: University Professors and Research Institute Leaders*. Known qualifications are retained rather than silently resolved: Newcastle's immediate succession, the exact wording of R. K. McKee's Belfast chair, and the transition date of A. H. Bunting's Reading title merit final calendar checking.

Table 2. What an undergraduate applicant sees in 2026

Classification. FLAG FLYING: 'Plant' is explicit in the formal undergraduate degree title. **FLAG STILL FLYING**: Cambridge only - its historic Natural Sciences structure continues, while the Department of Plant Sciences survives and students can specialise entirely in Plant Sciences. **FLAG LOWERED**: plant science may remain vigorous in teaching and research, but the botanical label has disappeared from the undergraduate award. **INSTITUTION MERGED**: the historic college no longer exists independently.

Institution	2026 undergraduate identity	Status	Interpretive note	Official / primary evidence
Aberdeen	Plant and Soil Science BSc (Hons)	**FLAG FLYING**	Plant explicit in degree title.	source
Aberystwyth	Plant Biology BSc	**FLAG FLYING**	Plant explicit in degree title.	source
Bangor	Biology	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plant teaching remains within Biology; no plant-named award.	source
Birmingham	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plants remain within broad Biological Sciences; no plant-named award.	source
Bristol	Plant Sciences BSc	**FLAG FLYING**	Plant explicit in degree title.	source
Cambridge	Natural Sciences Tripos; Plant Sciences Part II	**FLAG STILL FLYING**	Special case: longstanding Natural Sciences structure; Department of Plant Sciences survives and students can specialise entirely in Plant Sciences.	source
Cardiff	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plant science taught, but not in degree title.	source
Edinburgh	Biological Sciences (Plant Science) BSc (Hons)	**FLAG FLYING**	Plant explicit in formal degree title.	source
Exeter	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Named specialisms include Animal Biology, not Plant Science.	source
Glasgow	Molecular & Cellular Biology (with Plant Science) BSc/MSci	**FLAG FLYING**	Plant explicit in formal degree title.	source
Hull	Biology BSc (Hons)	**FLAG LOWERED**	No plant-named undergraduate award.	source
Leeds	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plant science continues, including postgraduate provision, but no plant-named undergraduate award.	source
Leicester	Biological Sciences; Zoology BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plants included in broad biology; Zoology remains explicitly named.	source
Liverpool	Biological Sciences BSc; Zoology BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Zoology remains a named degree; no parallel Plant Science degree.	source
Manchester	Biology BSc / Life Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Former Plant Science degree no longer appears in 2026 offer; Green Biotechnology remains an option.	source
Newcastle	Biology BSc / Agriculture BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plant science remains in modules and research; Applied Plant Science is not a current advertised 2026 degree.	source
Nottingham	Biology / broader biosciences	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plant science survives in teaching/research; no current plant-named undergraduate award verified.	source
Oxford	Biology BA/MBiol	**FLAG LOWERED**	Former Botany and Zoology departments merged into Biology; degree now Biology.	source
Queen's Belfast	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plants explicitly included in content, not degree title.	source
Reading	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	No plant-named undergraduate award.	source
Sheffield	Biological Sciences BSc; Zoology BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plant study remains in Biological Sciences; Zoology is separately named.	source
Southampton	Biology BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	No plant-named undergraduate award.	source
St Andrews	Biology	**FLAG LOWERED**	No plant-named undergraduate award.	source
Sussex	Biology	**FLAG LOWERED**	No plant-named undergraduate award.	source
Swansea	Biology	**FLAG LOWERED**	No plant-named undergraduate award.	source
University College London	Biological Sciences BSc; Zoology specialism	**FLAG LOWERED**	Formal specialisms include Zoology but not Plant Science.	source
Bedford College	Merged into Royal Holloway	**INSTITUTION MERGED**	No longer an independent institution.	source
Birkbeck College	Natural Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	2026 Natural Sciences pathways include Bioscience; no plant-named award.	source
Imperial College London	Biological Sciences BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Plants taught within broad Biological Sciences; no plant-named award.	source
Queen Mary College	Biology; Zoology BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Zoology explicitly named; no plant-named undergraduate degree.	source
Royal Holloway College	Biology BSc; Zoology BSc	**FLAG LOWERED**	Zoology explicitly named; no plant-named undergraduate degree.	source
Westfield College	Merged into Queen Mary	**INSTITUTION MERGED**	No longer an independent institution.	source

Table 3. The quantitative result - and how to state it safely

Measure	Result	Recommended wording
Distinct institutions/colleges in the 1967-70 reconstructed university census	**32**	32 institutions/colleges with an identified Botany or closely allied plant-science professorial/leadership presence - not 32 autonomous Botany departments.
Same historical cohort with 'Plant' explicit in a 2026 undergraduate degree title	**5 of 32 (15.6%)**	Aberdeen, Aberystwyth, Bristol, Edinburgh and Glasgow.
After excluding Bedford and Westfield, which ceased to exist independently	**5 of 30 (16.7%)**	Among surviving institutional lineages in the matched cohort, five retain 'Plant' explicitly in an undergraduate degree title.
Cambridge	**Separate exceptional case**	Do not count Cambridge as a lowered flag. Its Natural Sciences degree structure is longstanding; it retains the UK's conspicuous Department of Plant Sciences and a full Plant Sciences Part II specialisation.
Additional 2026 plant-visible university outside the historical matched cohort	**Edge Hill - Plant Science BSc (Hons)**	Edge Hill's 2026 prospectus explicitly lists Plant Science BSc (Hons), UCAS CC22.

Table 4. A particularly revealing asymmetry: Zoology remains visible where Plant Science does not

University	Animal-visible award	Plant comparison	Evidence
Leicester	Biological Sciences (Zoology) BSc	No equivalent Plant Science award in current Biological Sciences offer	source
Liverpool	Zoology BSc (Hons)	No parallel Plant Science undergraduate degree	source
Sheffield	Zoology BSc	Plant science remains within broader biosciences, but is not a degree title	source
UCL	Biological Sciences: Zoology specialism	Six formal specialisms include Zoology but not Plant Science	source
Queen Mary	Zoology BSc (Hons)	No parallel Plant Science degree	source
Royal Holloway	Zoology BSc	No parallel Plant Science degree	source

Benchmark: the 2022 plant-degree census

Stroud et al. (2022), *"The botanical education extinction and the fall of plant awareness"*, identified 11 UK universities then offering programmes called Plant Science/Plant Biology or close equivalents: Aberdeen, Aberystwyth, Canterbury Christ Church, Edge Hill, Nottingham, Sheffield, Glasgow, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle and Edinburgh. This provides a valuable independent benchmark against which the 2026 course offer can be checked. Open-access article.

Interpretive caution: course portfolios change quickly. The 2026 table records what could be verified as advertised for 2026 entry from university/primary pages at the time of checking (3 September 2026). It is a visibility census, not a census of plant-science research strength, staff numbers, modules, or postgraduate activity.