

EDITORIAL

Open Letters: Supporting positive change for plants, people and the planet

We are delighted to launch *Open Letters*, a new format for groups of experts to present bold and succinct calls to action to those in positions to elicit and enact change, such as practitioners and policy-makers (Box 1).

Plants, along with the soils and biological communities they depend on, are under growing threat globally. These complex ecosystems face a range of pressures, many driven or intensified by human activity, including habitat loss, soil degradation and disruptions to the organisms that support plant health and growth. These challenges are deeply connected to broader societal and global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and food security. How people, communities, organisations and countries use plants, protect them and restore the ecosystems in which plants play essential roles will be crucial to preventing ecological collapse and social instability. Against this backdrop and among the overwhelming noise generated in the age of digital information and social media, there is a need for experts on plants and their associated biota to ensure their voices are heard by those in positions to make decisions and oversee meaningful and impactful change for the benefit of people and the planet.

Open Letters will unite teams of experts around important and timely issues at the intersection of plants, people and the planet. *Open Letters* will outline a specific plant-focussed issue or challenge that the expert author team feels needs a new approach on the global stage based on insufficiently considered science-derived evidence and express this concisely in plain language for a broad readership. Authors of *Open Letters* should present bold arguments that are scientifically supported and conveyed in a constructive manner. Along these lines, we encourage authors to briefly outline the steps or ways forward they feel are needed to overcome the issue(s) outlined in the piece. We particularly welcome *Open Letters* related to ongoing international debates, agreements and treaties such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and Nagoya Protocol.

Open Letters can accompany a research article submission to *Plants, People, Planet* that presents data or a perspective that adds scientific weight to the call to action presented in the companion *Open Letter*.

Authors of *Open Letters* may also serve as signatories to further endorse the key message of the piece. For example, please see Pilon et al. (2025), which has 137 authors and signatories.

In terms of the writing style to adopt for an *Open Letter*, we encourage authors to develop their case in the form of a short 'elevator pitch' to a journalist or policymaker.

BOX 1 The article format description for *Open Letters*.

Open Letters present bold and authoritative calls to action to those in positions to elicit and enact change, such as practitioners and policymakers. *Open Letters* should be concise and avoid technical jargon to ensure their message is clear to a broad audience. We welcome pieces that seek to achieve positive change in policy or practice regarding plants and their role in addressing societal challenges and global issues. Examples might include plants and their role in ecosystem restoration or climate change mitigation, agriculture or pieces focussed on the responsible and equitable use of plants, including their associated genetic resources or other digital information. To add sufficient weight and authority to the call to action, we welcome *Open Letters* that are authored by teams of multiple experts who may also serve as signatories to further endorse the central message of the piece. Please see Pilon et al. (2025) as an example, which has 137 authors and signatories. Given the timely nature of *Open Letters*, we will endeavour to assess them using a rapid peer review process to ensure swift publication. *Open Letters* do not require a Societal Impact Statement or Summary section and as a guideline should typically be around 500 words in length, with up to 15 references. *Open Letters* can accompany a research article submission to *Plants, People, Planet* that presents scientific data to support the call to action presented in the *Open Letter*. Please direct presubmission enquiries for *Open Letters* to ppp@lancaster.ac.uk.

Disclaimer: The New Phytologist Foundation remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in maps and in any institutional affiliations.

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2025 The Author(s). *Plants, People, Planet* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of New Phytologist Foundation.

We welcome proposals for *Open Letters* on an ongoing basis. If you have an idea for an *Open Letter* on a plant-focussed issue of broad importance, then please do get in touch (ppp@lancaster.ac.uk). Given the anticipated timely nature of *Open Letters*, we will endeavour to assess them using a rapid peer review process to ensure swift publication. Our experienced promotion and communication team are also on hand to help ensure *Open Letters* get the full promotion they deserve by assisting with the coordination of press releases or other promotion activities to ensure wide impact.

We are now keen to hear from potential authors and the community and hope you find this new format useful for raising greater awareness to issues that you feel as leaders and experts in the field need greater attention.

KEYWORDS

climate change, conservation, planet, plants, policy, policymakers, restoration, societal impact

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable—no new data generated.

Simon J. Hiscock^{1,2} 
Katie J. Field³ 
Sarah Lennon⁴ 
Paul Wilkin⁵ 
Bennett John Young⁴ 

¹Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, Oxford, UK

²Department of Biology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

³Plants, Photosynthesis and Soil, School of Biosciences, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

⁴The New Phytologist Foundation, Furness College, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

⁵Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK

Correspondence

Simon J. Hiscock, Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ, UK.

Email: simon.hiscock@obg.ox.ac.uk

ORCID

Simon J. Hiscock  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0954-0540>

Katie J. Field  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5196-2360>

Sarah Lennon  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2860-6480>

Paul Wilkin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4982-7175>

Bennett John Young  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9629-1142>

REFERENCE

Pilon, N., Peixoto, F., Oliveira, R. S., Oliveira, A. C. C., Alquéres, J., Alvarado, S., Angelo, J. G. M., Archibald, S., Armani, M., Baldaszti, L., Barot, S., Barros, F. d. V., Barroso, M., Bassani, A., te Beest, M., Benavides-Tocarruncho, J., Benitez, L. M., Bernardino, P. N., Bond, W. J., ... Durigan, G. (2025). Open letter: There are more than just trees and forests to be conserved and restored. *Plants, People, Planet*, 7, 1220–1224. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppp3.10635>