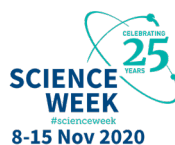


# Q&A



## Sustaining Plant Diversity into the Future - 9 Nov, 2020



Paul Fitters Felicity Gaffney Matthew Jebb Colin Kelleher Noeleen Smyth



### 1) What does the Aloe Ferox Sap do for us?

*"Aloe ferox is a popular medicinal plant with a long history of use both locally and internationally. The species is favoured for its traditional use as laxative bitters and more recently as a source of raw material for health drinks and a range of cosmetic products." - Noeleen Smyth*

### 2) How/ why did you become involved in the study of plants?

*"Plants are amazing! They are the closest thing we have to aliens in the planet. Imagine being able to grow your own nutritious food by sunbathing! That is fantastic - photosynthesis." - Matthew Jebb*

### 3) What proportion of the herbarium samples are from native Irish plants?

*"We have about 100,000 specimens of vascular plants of native Irish plants. This is the largest collection in Ireland. The other 600,000 specimens are made up of a variety of different plant types and fungi, including a large world collection." - Colin Kelleher*



Herbarium Sample

### 4) What is the most dangerous plant in Ireland?

*"Two particularly dangerous plants are hemlock and Giant Hogweed. Both of these are in the carrot family. Hemlock is native and can poison when ingested. Giant hogweed is an invasive alien species. It can cause very bad burns." - Colin Kelleher*

### 5) What can people do in their homes, gardens, work and day to day lives do to support and encourage plant diversity?

*"Allow a little bit of wildness into your garden is great for biodiversity, both plants and animals. Especially lawns can be very biodiverse if we stop cutting them weekly, but rather letting areas go and cut them say twice a year. Plant native species if possible." - Matthew Jebb*



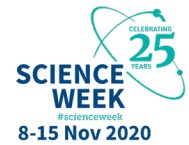
Giant Hogweed

### 6) Do we have any carnivorous plants in Ireland?

*"Yes, there are plenty of them. Mainly in bog/peatland habitats. Sundews and Butterworts trap insects on their leaves and use them to bolster their nitrogen intake." - Noeleen Smyth*



Paul Fitters    Felicity Gaffney    Matthew Jebb    Colin Kelleher    Noeleen Smyth



**7) Is it better to completely stop purchasing products with palm oil or continue to buy them but make sure they are sustainably produced?**

*"I would think keep buying peoples livelihoods depend on them but like felicity said look to see if they say they are sustainably produced." - Felicity Gaffney*

**8) I'd definitely like to move away from exotic, unseasonal, and externally sourced fruit and veg. We really can live perfectly healthily with Irish grown produce. Though I've been told that some cereals for human consumption are a problem in our wet climate.**

*"There is a great article in The Irish Times at the weekend on eating only Irish grown produce. It is well worth checking out: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/food-and-drink/a-month-eating-only-irish-food-pricey-time-consuming-boring-1.4401218>." - Felicity Gaffney*

**9) Can we not eat Japanese knotweed instead of using diesel to kill it?**

*"The plant is said to be edible as a young tender stem during the months of April and May. As the plant matures, the stems toughen and can cause abrasions in the mouth. Although there is a wealth of recipes online, it's worth noting that there are few specific health benefits associated with eating it, other than as a herbal treatment for Lyme Disease and a means to lowering cholesterol." - Paul Fitters*



**Japanese Knotweed**

**10) Horticultural and green skills still seem undervalued in the market place and is evident by industry salaries. Since plants and plant science are so essential to our existence, how do the panellists think these skill can be correctly valued?**

*"I totally agree, if plants and products were correctly valued it would go a long way. Also professional recognised standards in horticultural sectors would be great. We need horticulture skills now more than ever." - Matthew Jebb*



**11) Where does funding for all the research come from?**

*"Funding can come from government sources, such as DAFM, SFI, and some private industries, but a lot more funding is needed." - Colin Kelleher*