

The 3rd Global Plant Humanities Conference



8-10 MAY 2026

Shillong, Meghalaya, India



Botanical Life in Art, Science, and Imagination



Host: Department of English, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India

Partners:

Nulungu Research Institute, University of Notre Dame, Australia, NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal, Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya (affiliated with the University of Calcutta), Department of English, Cotton University, Guwahati, India, Gift From the Sentient Forest Project, Northern Finland

CONCEPT NOTE

Humanity is profoundly intertwined with the botanical realm. As sources of nourishment, healing, beauty, pleasure, and spiritual experience, plants are vital globally. While making our physical existence possible, floristic life also inspires our identities and expresses our cultural heritage. Populating nearly every corner of the world, plants represent 80–90 percent of the Earth's biomass. Notwithstanding humanity's indisputable interdependence on botanical nature, the future of vegetal diversity is uncertain. Habitat degradation, land use changes, and climatic instability will continue to imperil forests, wetlands, grasslands, aquatic ecosystems, and other botanical communities.

In response to global environmental change, plant humanities (PH) has taken shape as an inter-/transdisciplinary area of research, pedagogy, and activism concerning plants and their multifaceted transactions with humankind. Entering the public domain in 2018, the term plant humanities refers to “humanistic modes of interpretation” in the study of flora, society, culture, communities, history, art, literature, and other disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences (Batsaki 2021, 2). According to the Dumbarton Oaks Plant Humanities Initiative (2023), plants offer ‘remarkable scope for research and interpretation due to their global mobility and historical significance to human cultures’ (para. 1).

The recent turn towards plants in the environmental humanities aims to critique deep-seated preconceptions of botanical life as insentient, immobile, and inconsequential non-animals. The burgeoning field critiques dominant cultural narratives of flora as passive and promotes awareness of the significance of vegetal diversity. Scholars draw widely from the related domains of critical plant studies (philosophy), ethnobotany (anthropology), human-plant studies (cultural studies), phytocriticism (literary studies), plant geography, and neurobotany (plant science).

In dialogue with recent empirical advances, plant humanists reevaluate the longstanding presumption that botanical life lacks sentient behavior. The field considers how emerging intersectional understandings of plants can reshape cultural, social, and literary engagements with them. Known by plant neurobiology, the science of plant intelligence examines cognitive processes in flora. This growing area of research points to the presence of altruism, communication, memory, sensing, and other percipient qualities of the botanical world.

Traversing art, science, and imagination, plant humanities illuminates the material and affective linkages between plants, people, and ecologies. Researchers examine the narratives and ideas connected to flora; the creative works inspired by various species; and the heterogeneous values that embed plants in socioeconomic contexts. The field investigates a broad range of concerns—from climate change and food security to the loss of biodiversity and plant-based cultural heritage. PH calls attention to ethical issues including the social repercussions of genetically modified flora and the moral implications of plant intelligence for cultivation paradigms, even indigenous practices and wisdoms intertwined with the secret life of plants and esoteric beliefs that shape the ecosystems of smaller societies and pastoral communities.

The 3rd International Conference on Global Plant Humanities: Botanical Life in Art, Science, and Imagination at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India, 8–10 May 2026, will further the conversation between the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences towards new perspectives on the vegetal world and human-botanical relations. Foregrounding comparative, cross-cultural approaches to studying plants, the conference will highlight advances in plant humanities scholarship globally.

CONCEPT NOTE

We invite paper and panel proposals including, but not limited to, the following topic areas:

1. Art, literature, performance, music, and the botanical world
2. Narratives of vegetal agency, sensing, behavior, learning, and cognition
3. Narratives of vegetal temporality, memory, and communication
4. Plants ethics, aesthetics, and phenomenology
5. Botanical conservation, citizen science, arts, and humanities
6. Social and cultural implications of scientific advances in plant intelligence
7. Gender, sexuality, identity, and flora
8. Artistic and design practices engaging plants as partners, collaborators, and agents
9. Botanical film, media, and popular culture
10. Phytopoetics, phytocriticism, and phytosemiotics
11. Plants, posthumanism, and the posthumanities
12. Plants, postcolonialism, and globalization
13. Spiritualities and theological traditions involving plants
14. Plants, nostalgia, solastalgia, mourning, and memorialization
15. Interactions between flora, fauna, and fungi in narratives
16. Traditional and folk botanical knowledge systems
17. Indigenous people's relations to plants and ecosystems
18. Botanical pedagogies addressing issues of 'plant blindness' and 'plant awareness disparity'
19. The emergence of the Plant Humanities in the Global South
19. South Asian interventions in the field (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka).
20. Southeast Asian interventions in the field (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste (East Timor), and Vietnam)

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Deadline for Abstract Submission: Proposals for 20-minute papers and 1.5 hour panels (with 3–4 presenters) will be assessed on a rolling basis. No proposals will be considered after 15 March 2026.

Abstract Submissions: Email your abstract (max. 200 words) with five relevant keywords along with a bio-note (max. 50 words).

Panel Proposals: Email your panel theme (max. 200 words) and 3–4 abstracts (max. 200 words each) along with bio-notes for each presenter including the chair. The chair can also be one of the presenters. For panels with 3 speakers, each presenter will have 20 minutes. For panels with 4 speakers, each presenter will have 15 minutes.

Email Contact: Please send all proposals to globalplanthumanities@gmail.com

Mode: In-person primarily (limited online participation available)

CONFERENCE FEES:

Indian Participants: 2,500 INR

SAARC Participants Outside India (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka): 25 USD

All Other International Participants: 80 USD

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

CONTACTS

Please direct all inquiries to the following members of the organizing committee:

For Indian and other SAARC Participants: Mr Goutam Majhi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya (affiliated with the University of Calcutta), West Bengal, India. By email <goutammajhi78@gmail.com> or phone: +91-9051534490

For All Other International Participants: Dr John C. Ryan, Associate Professor and Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Nulungu Institute, University of Notre Dame, Australia. By email only: <john.c.ryan2025@gmail.com>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Global-Plant-Humanities/61554500413830/>

Website: www.globalplanthumanities.com

Whatsapp Group: more information to follow

VENUE INFORMATION

Established in 1973, North-Eastern Hill University (<https://nehu.ac.in>) is the oldest central university in the Northeastern region of India which has the objectives to disseminate and advance knowledge by providing instructional and research facilities in such branches of learning as it may deem fit; to pay special attention to the improvement of the social and economic conditions and welfare of the people of the hill areas of the Northeast, and, in particular, their intellectual, academic and cultural advancement. Ensnored in the midst of pine forests spread over an area of about 1100 acres, NEHU has 44 academic departments, with 36 of them located on the Shillong campus and 11 of them on the Tura campus. At present, there are 53 undergraduate colleges affiliated with the University, including 8 professional colleges. The Department of English, established in 1973, is one of the oldest departments of the university with a distinctive history of producing several authors, poets, and critics considered the most eminent in the Northeast of India.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL PLANT HUMANITIES NETWORK (GPHN)

GPHN was conceived during The 1st International Conference on Global Plant Humanities, which took place at Sadhan Chandra Mahavidyalaya in West Bengal on the 12th of December 2023, attracting participants from around the world. The 2nd International Conference on Global Plant Humanities took place in May 2025 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Accommodation: The registration fee does not cover accommodation and travel expenses. Participants will have to arrange their own stay and travel. However, the organisers can share contact details of the university guest house on prior request for direct booking.

How to reach Shillong: Guwahati is the nearest international airport and railway station to Shillong. There is a domestic airport at Shillong with limited connectivity from select cities. From Guwahati, it is about 2/3 hours to Shillong by road. Taxis and bus services are available from airport and the railway station in Guwahati.