

EDITORIAL

Announcing Thomas Reviews: A new format for impact at the intersection of plants, people and the planet

In this issue, we present three inaugural Thomas Reviews. Thomas Reviews are invited articles that provide authoritative and accessible reviews on topics at the intersection of plants, people and the planet. Thomas Reviews unite authors across disciplines to highlight innovative research that seeks to address global issues through plant-focused questions and solutions. Rather than documenting existing literature, Thomas Reviews focus on synthesising knowledge and presenting novel ideas and perspectives to drive forward research and highlight the wider societal impact of plants for people and the planet. Thomas Reviews aim to engage a broad audience of readers and form trusted and well-respected resources for scientists, policymakers, educators and anyone with an interest in plants and their impact on humanity and the planet. Although Thomas Reviews are invited articles, suggestions for potential pieces are welcome. Please direct any queries to *Plants, People, Planet* Central Office (ppp@lancaster.ac.uk).

Thomas Reviews are led by three outstanding editors, each of whom is responsible for an overarching theme of the journal: *Plants, People and Planet*.

The *Plants* theme is led by [Quentin Cronk](#), who is professor of botany at the University of British Columbia, Canada. Quentin's work uses comparative genomics, molecular developmental biology and evolutionary biology to study plant form and particularly how morphologies evolve and the functional significance of morphological differences between plant species. Quentin explores these themes in a number of plants, including the Leguminosae (floral morphology) and black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*; adaptive evolution of trees).

[Dawn Sanders](#) heads up the *People* theme. Dawn is a professor at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Dawn's research interests focus on the social challenges in comprehending what it means for humans to perceive the importance of plants in a time of extreme anthropogenic change. She is particularly interested in the role of art in making visible the characteristics and capacities identified with 'Life as Plant' with an interdisciplinary approach at its centre.

The *Planet* theme is led by [Anna Harper](#), associate professor in Earth system modelling and artificial intelligence, at the University of Georgia, USA. Anna's research focuses on the interactions between vegetation, people and climate, with particular reference to climate models and how we can improve models of the Earth system to enhance and protect natural carbon sinks or to manage landscapes

to reduce the impacts of climate change and to better understand how ecosystems respond to a changing environment.

The inaugural Thomas Reviews represent all three themes of *Plants, People and Planet*, and we are delighted to present these to our readers.

The first *Plants* Thomas Review is by John Thompson and co-authors and is titled 'Plant conservation in a changing Mediterranean world' (Thompson et al., 2025). This work focuses on the links between the science of plant species conservation in the Mediterranean region, the temporal attitudes of scientists and the need for meaningful dialogue with society, exploring three ecological and evolutionary foundations for the science of plant conservation in this changing region and how these are associated with a temporal attitude.

David Ludwig represents the *People* theme with his article 'Transdisciplinary plant sciences: A review' (Ludwig, 2025). This work considers the growing prominence of transdisciplinary research methods with a plant focus that aims to capture diverse stakeholders outside of academia, such as farmers, policymakers and local communities. It also highlights the need for a synthesising account of transdisciplinarity in the plant sciences that responds to its complex opportunities and challenges given the increasing importance of transdisciplinary methods.

In our first *Planet* piece, titled 'Impacts of the renewable energy transition on global plant diversity: A review', Rachel Gallagher and co-authors consider the global-scale renewable energy transition that is currently underway and the challenges and opportunities this raises for plant life (Gallagher et al., 2025). The authors provide a summary of the potential impacts, and emerging solutions, for plants in this transition. Their work seeks to chart a course for policymakers, proponents and conservationists to consider plants when planning, designing and building renewable energy infrastructure and projects.

We hope the three inaugural reviews will set a benchmark for future submissions, and we are delighted that such outstanding researchers agreed to contribute their work to launch our new review series. We also offer our thanks to the editors and reviewers who have helped assess these articles and shaped the Thomas Reviews from their conception through to the publication of these works.

Thomas Reviews are named in honour of Professor Howard (Sid) Thomas, who was a key founding member of *Plants, People, Planet*'s Strategic Advisory Board and Treasurer and Trustee of the [New Phytologist Foundation](#). Sid also served on the editorial board of *New*

Phytologist from 1991 to 2007; his term as Treasurer and Trustee spanned from 2011 to 2022.

Sid was born in Neath, South Wales, and undertook his undergraduate and postgraduate study at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. His research career took him to the Welsh Plant Breeding Station at Plas Gogerddan, later part of the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), where he combined senior management positions with his research work. The Institute merged with Aberystwyth University in 2007, and Sid became Emeritus Professor of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences. Sid also held visiting professorships at the Universities of California, Bern and Zurich and enjoyed many international collaborations with plant scientists, social scientists, arts and humanities scholars, visual artists and beyond (Silk et al., 2022).

Sid's research spanned many facets of plant biology. His work on leaf senescence and chlorophyll catabolism was particularly notable, making a substantial contribution to our understanding (Thomas, 2012; Thomas & Ougham, 2014). His works beyond the bench included collaborations with literature scholars Jayne Archer and Richard Marggraf Turley, such as *Food and the Literary Imagination* and social scientists (Archer et al., 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2017; Marggraf Turley et al., 2012; Thomas, 2016a, 2016b; Thomas et al., 2016, 2022).

Sid was elected fellow of both the Linnean Society and the Learned Society of Wales.

Sid's varied and truly interdisciplinary interests meant that he was an enthusiastic and visionary contributor to the launch of *Plants, People, Planet*. He contributed from the very earliest stages, working with the New Phytologist Trustees and Editorial team to define the scope and remit of the journal and identifying and recruiting the first editors. He submitted his own work for publication and provided invaluable support in an editorial capacity. Sid remained active up until his death in 2022, which came as a huge shock to his many friends and colleagues in the plant science community and beyond (Silk et al., 2022).

Sid was something of a polymath. Readers of *Plants, People, Planet* may know his scholarly achievements, but he was also a talented jazz musician, recording and collaborating with other musicians and quickly becoming a fixture on the music scene in Kent where he settled with his wife and collaborator, Helen Ougham, in recent years. He was also a prolific author on non-science topics, and in later years a publisher (Thomas, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018, 2021).

Sid's work for the New Phytologist Foundation as Treasurer ensured the stability and sustainability of the organisation, and his care and consideration for the work of the Foundation, and the people involved in it resonate to this day, for example, his careful financial planning helped ensure the organisation was able to support the launch of *Plants, People, Planet* and the 'next generation scientists' symposium series.

New Phytologist Symposia and next-generation scientists symposia were important to Sid, and The Foundation's ethos of supporting and nurturing early career plant scientists was core to his continued support for the organisation. This is also evidenced in his other activities including his support for the Botanical University Challenge (Hall et al., 2025). But perhaps one of his most significant contributions to nurturing the next generation of scientists lies in his written work and in his generosity in making his writing available. His published articles at *New Phytologist* and *Plants,*

People, Planet remain amongst the most downloaded works published by the journals, particularly his *New Phytologist* Tansley review on senescence, and he was an early champion at the journal of scholarship in plant awareness disparity (also referred to as 'plant blindness'), enthusiastically contributing to one of our first special issues on the topic (Thomas, 2019) and producing a monograph on the topic in 2021 (Thomas, 2021).

Sid and Helen, together with Russell Jones and Susan Waaland, authored *The Molecular Life of Plants*, which was published in collaboration with Wiley and the American Association of Plant Biologists (Jones et al., 2012). This groundbreaking textbook remains a keystone text for any aspiring plant molecular biologist, so much so, and again in testament to Sid and Helen's desire to support the next generation of plant scientists, that Sid and Helen donated a number of copies of this book and others, as prizes at the New Phytologist Foundation events. Many of Sid's writings can be found on his website, which is still active (<https://sidthomas.net/wp/>).

The very first issue of *Plants, People, Planet* featured an editorial that quoted the well-known first verse from Dylan Thomas' *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower*, another Welshman (Hiscock et al., 2018). It seems somewhat fitting to highlight Sid's own lyrical work, which touches upon the power of nature and plants, as we launch the Thomas Reviews:

Pale Creatures

The yew endures four thousand years.
The mayfly dances for a few summer hours.
And so it goes: every thing lives a lifetime.

Something lives under every stone—
Pale creatures hatching by the light of the moon.
And so it goes: every thing lives a lifetime.

Time, a hare and tortoise race.
Lichen on a sundial's face.
Life's now. Time's never.
And so it goes: the glass falls hour by hour, forever.

Daughters of Adam, sons of Eve,
Cast fleeting shadows on the walls of the cave.
And so it goes: every thing lives a lifetime.

Melting clockface, leafless tree.
Apple where the head should be.
Still life. Still standing.
And so it goes: to fly is easy, the hard part is landing.

Meanwhile, in awful solitude,
Out there two galaxies approach and collide.
And so it goes: every thing lives a lifetime.

Words and music by Sid Thomas
(on YouTube at <https://bit.ly/3SwEXDY> or
on Spotify at <https://spoti.fi/3rfzGVH>).

Sid is survived by his wife Helen, son Ben, who follows in Sid's footsteps as a scientist, grandsons Rowan, Brodie and Sam, brother Brian (also a plant scientist) and sister Gillian.

Those of us at the New Phytologist Foundation miss Sid enormously, as a friend and colleague, and in launching the Thomas Reviews, we hope to pay tribute to him by continuing his work championing interdisciplinary plant-focused research and the next generation of researchers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable—no new data generated.

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