

Plant and Microbes Day at the Botanical Garden

1st IPMB Early Career Researcher Symposium

9th of October 2026

Scientific Programme

8:45-9:00 Registration and coffee

9:00- 9:05 Introduction

Morning session: Plant and Microbes at IPMB

9:05 – 10.00 **Session 1. Chair: Moutasem Omary**

- **Chiara Suanno** (*Postdoc, Christoph Ringli group*) - Describing what you cannot see: characterization of plant extracellular vesicles
- **Martinus Hjørungnes** (*PhD student, Gabriella Pessi group*) - Contact-dependent inhibition as a mechanism for nodulation competitiveness in beta-rhizobia
- **Jana Ordon** (*Postdoc, Cyril Zipfel group*) - Plant immunity in a microbial world: immunomodulation by plant-colonizing microorganisms

10:00-10:15 **Vazyme: Innovative solutions for plant research**

10:15- 10:45 **Coffee break**

10:45-11:35 **Session 2. Chair: Max Schwarze**

- **Zuzanna Olga Bednarska** (*PhD student, Thomas Posch group*) – *Planktothrix rubescens* Blooms: Implications for Water Safety and Ecosystem Functioning
- **Harshith Chitthavalli Y.** (*Postdoc, Cyril Zipfel group*) - From precursor to bioactive signaling peptide: apoplastic proteolysis governs the maturation of secreted peptides in plants
- **Paula Belles Sancho** (*Postdoc, Gabriella Pessi group*) - *Paraburkholderia phymatum*'s symbiotic ability and high competitiveness in legume root infection

11:35-11:45 **Break**

11:45-12:30 **Jun.-Prof. Dr. Sjon Hartman** - Learning from Nature - Decoding Plant Flooding Stress Resilience through Context-Dependent Signalling

12:30-13:30 **Lunch and Poster** 😊

Afternoon session: Plant and Microbes beyond academia

Session 3. Chair: Priscilla Carrillo Barragán

13:30-14:05 **Dr. Ernesto Llamas** - Research, Startups and Science Communication: A Plant Biologist's Journey into Neuroscience, Biotech and Illustration

14:05–14:45 **IPMB alumni talks and Experience after academia:**

Miguel Wente (Benchling), **Daphné Golaz** (Center for Space and Aviation Switzerland and Liechtenstein), **Sebastian Hug** (Bioxam)

Session 4. Chair: Marie Le Naour--Vernet

14:45–15:05: **Lukas Buser (VAUZ)** - Employee rights and resources for junior researchers

15:05–15:35: **Emeritus Professor Beat Keller** - The Privilege of Discovery: Building a Career in Academic Research

15:35–15:40: Feedback and Closing remark before official Friday Forum

15:40–16:00 **Coffee break and posters**

Friday Forum. Chair: Diana Gómez De La Cruz

16:00–16:45 **Dr. Aileen Berasategui** - Plant pathogens moonlighting as insect mutualists

17:00 onwards **Apéro and Poster session from Postdoc, PhD and Master students**

Symposium Party DJ by Ale!

Invited speakers

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Sjon Hartman – University of Freiburg, DE.



Sjon Hartman studied Biology and completed his PhD at Utrecht University (Netherlands) winning a prize for the best botanical PhD thesis of 2020. After a postdoc in Utrecht and a Rubicon Fellowship at the University of Birmingham, he became Junior Professor of Plant Environmental Signalling and Development at Freiburg in 2022. His group investigates how plants sense and adapts to flooding, including how past floods shape responses to future ones ("flooding memory").

Dr. Ernesto Llamas – University of Cologne - Sketching Science <https://sketchingscience.org/>



Ernesto Llamas earned his PhD in Biotechnology at the Center for Research in Agricultural Genomics (CRAG) in Barcelona. As a GO-Bio initial grant awardee, he is founding a startup that uses plant-derived proteins to reduce protein aggregation in diseases like Huntington's. In 2016 he started Sketching Science, a science communication project whose illustrations and comics now reach nearly half a million followers on social media.

Emeritus Professor Beat Keller – University of Zurich, IPMB.



Beat Keller studied biology at the University of Basel, earning his PhD in 1985, followed by a postdoc at the Salk Institute in San Diego. After leading a biotechnology group at Agroscope in Zurich, he became Professor of Plant Molecular Biology at the University of Zurich in 1997, where he directed the Institute of Plant Biology until 2014. He is known for his research on disease resistance in cereals and for his contributions to wheat genome sequencing. He also served as Vice President of the Swiss Academy of Sciences and as a member of the Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Dr. Aileen Berasategui – The Sainsbury Laboratory, UK.



Aileen Berasategui studied Biology at the University of Oviedo, Spain, and earned her PhD at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology in Jena, studying how gut microbes help the pine weevil detoxify plant defence compounds. After postdocs at Emory University (Atlanta) and the University of Tübingen, she became Assistant Professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and, in 2024, received an ERC Starting Grant for her project SymPathy. Since 2026 she has led a group at The Sainsbury Laboratory investigating how plant-pathogenic fungi can also act as insect symbionts, and the molecular dialogue that lets them switch between these roles.

Event sponsored by



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