

Plant Fever: Politics, Poetics, and Pleasures of Houseplants

A Conference on Plant Humanities and Experimental Methodologies.

2–3 December 2025 | Copenhagen, Denmark



Call for papers

Organized in conjunction with the art exhibition *Plant Fever* at The Hirschsprung Collection and Ordrupgaard. Hosted by the research project *Hidden Plant Stories* (Aarhus University, Ordrupgaard and The Hirschsprung Collection) supported by the Velux Foundation.

Collaborating partners: the research programme *Environmental Media and Aesthetics* (Aarhus University), *Center for Practice-based Art Studies* (University of Copenhagen).

Organizing team: Martha Fleming, Nick Shepherd, Anette Vandsø, and conference secretary Martin Bjerg Dahl

Houseplants are often relegated to the decorative margins of domestic life, where they are seen but not studied, tended but not taken seriously. This conference seeks to reframe the houseplant as a critical site for exploring the cultural, political, aesthetic, and ecological entanglements between humans and plants. By houseplants, we refer broadly to plants growing in (semi-)domesticated environments including homes, greenhouses, institutional interiors, or curated garden spaces, where botanical, ornamental, and affective values intersect with histories of collecting, coloniality, and care. Our shared point of departure is that notion that houseplants are inherently political and aesthetic phenomena, entangled with practices of care and relations of power. This conference thus aims to explore the *politics, poetics, and pleasures* of houseplants, using houseplants as a figure for rethinking how we engage with living collections and overlooked vegetal archives, and how we might collect differently, tell differently, and know differently in times of environmental urgency.

A key question of this conference is: in what ‘archives’ do we find the overlooked house plant stories, and how do we explore them? We invite scholars, artists, curators, gardeners, and practitioners from across disciplines to join us in excavating the quieter, overlooked, and hidden stories of plant life in domestic and institutional interiors.

Drawing on the interdisciplinary terrain of the *plant humanities*, we ask: What narratives do houseplants carry within them? How might multispecies relationships of care offer new modes of knowledge production? And what happens when we turn scholarly, curatorial, or creative attention to the plants that live with us? What plant stories can we find in the archives of institutions of science, art and culture? We particularly welcome proposals that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Overlooked archives of houseplant stories – what stories emerge from collections of the art museums, cultural museums or the natural museums? What stories are found in the domestic sphere of everyday life? And how do we explore it?
- The need to construct new archives, collections, databases or materials through explorative methodologies.

- The role of doing, crafting, collecting, and exploring as forms of knowledge production.
- The potential of plant archives to inform multispecies, feminist, and decolonial narratives.
- Practices that emphasize public engagement, participatory methods, and community-based research.
- The intersections of plant archives with environmental urgency, colonial legacies, and climate change.
- Houseplants as a lens for exploring biodiversity loss, extractive trade routes, and shifting ecologies across the global South and North.
- Metaphorical or conceptual explorations of *house* and *plant*, including speculative or artistic approaches

We seek to create a critical cohort to consider how we might collect differently, tell differently, and ultimately know differently in a time of environmental precarity. We therefore welcome submissions from a wide range of fields, including but not limited to: environmental humanities, art history, performance studies, literature, visual culture, anthropology, Indigenous studies, museum studies, heritage studies, botany, horticultural studies, science and technology studies, design, and sound studies. We also invite contributions from those working in community gardens, botanical institutions, conservation, activism, and creative practice who are experimenting with how we might create and curate new narratives around plants. We encourage contributions that employ experimental methodologies or speculative approaches, that challenge conventional boundaries between disciplines, species, and epistemologies to mirror the complexity of human-plant co-habitation.

Formats include traditional papers, performative lectures, workshops, and collaborative panels with approximately 15 min. per presentation.

Instructions for Submission

Please email a title, 300-word abstract and short bio statement to the conference organizers on plantfever2025@cc.au.dk

The abstract should suggest both the content and format of your presentation.

Deadline: September 15, 2025, final confirmation October 10, final registration for speakers November 1, 2025

Additional activities

On December 1st in the afternoon participants will be invited to join an optional tour related to the art exhibition *Plant Fever*.

On December 4th we host an intensive PhD-course with exclusive paper presentations in continuation of the conference. For more information, contact organizer Anette Vandsø (vandsoe@cc.au.dk)