



THE PLANT SCIENCE FAMILY REUNION

PROGRAM 2026

#STLPlantFam26

  @39northSTL



2026

8:00 –
9:00



Registration & Networking

9:00 –
9:10



Dr. Rishi Masalia
39 North

Welcome

9:10 –
9:30



Emily Lohse-Busch
39 North

Reflect on the St. Louis ag innovation ecosystem over the past year, what's happening currently, and how we can meet this moment.

9:30 –
9:50



Job Seeker Session

Engage with researchers, innovators, and professionals who are looking for their next role and eager to build new connections.

9:50 –
10:10



Dr. Kim Hodge-Bell
Bayer

Learn how everyday frameworks can help us better understand risk in science and agriculture.

10:10 –
10:30



Dr. Lisa Ainsworth
Univ. Illinois

Discover whether enhanced rock weathering could become a practical tool for improving soils while addressing a changing climate.

10:30 –
10:55



Networking

10:55 –
11:15



Vin Ko
9 PBS

Discover how the principles of community building behind St. Louis CITY SC can strengthen teams, organizations, and communities.

2026

11:15 –
11:35



Dr. Michael Sykuta
Mizzou, CRES

Learn how data centers fit into the future of rural America, and the complex questions surrounding land use, water, energy, and agricultural productivity.

11:35 –
11:55



Dr. Jordan Teisher
MoBot

Learn about the RSI Project and how the Missouri Botanical Garden's Herbarium is becoming a valuable resource for plant scientists around the world through large-scale digitization.

11:55 –
12:15



Dan Kurdys
9 North Group

Explore how AI is changing the way we work, what creates lasting competitive advantages, and the practical strategies leaders and contributors can use to help their organizations adapt.

12:15 –
1:15



Lunch

1:15 –
1:35



Ron Kitchens
Greater St. Louis Inc.

Learn how Greater St. Louis, Inc. is bringing together business and civic leaders to drive economic growth, attract investment, and shape the future of the St. Louis region.

1:35 –
1:55



Dr. Travis Frey
Pivot Bio

Explore how changing markets, global pressures, and evolving customer needs are driving the next generation of agricultural innovation, and how companies can adapt to stay ahead.

1:55 –
2:15



Dr. Amanuel Ghebretinsae
Bayer

Learn how Bayer transforms scientific discoveries into products by using customer feedback, market needs, and commercialization to guide innovation from the discovery pipeline to the farm.

2:15 –
2:45



Mike DeCamp
Expedition-Ag

Kim Hurst
Confluence Genetics

Learn how market demand, customer signals, and the agricultural value chain influence which new technologies ultimately reach the farm.

Moderated by Emily Lohse-Busch

2026

2:45 -
3:10



Networking

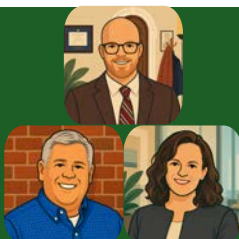
3:10 -
3:30



*Kyle Welborn
Cultivation Capital*

Learn how the agtech investment landscape is evolving, from changing investor priorities to the technologies and business models attracting today's capital.

3:30 -
4:05



*Travis Fitzwater, MTC
Dr. Allison Davis, MOST
Bryan Witherbee, Agragene*

Explore how scientists, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders can engage policymakers to strengthen funding, innovation, and investment.

Moderated by Hallie Thompson

4:05 -
4:25



*Dr. Michelle Starke
CoverCress, Inc.*

Learn how regulatory frameworks can enable innovation, and what the evolving landscape for gene-edited crops means for startups, researchers, and agriculture.

4:25 -
4:45



*Dr. Erin Sparks
Mizzou & DDPSC*

Learn how research on maize brace roots led to an unexpected entrepreneurial journey, revealing how solving scientific challenges can uncover new opportunities for innovation.

4:45 -
5:05



*Dr. Doug Frantz
WashU*

Should academia redefine how it measures success? Explore how entrepreneurship, industry partnerships, and societal impact can complement traditional research achievements.

5:05 -
5:10



*Emily Lohse-Busch
39 North*

Closing Remarks

5:15 -
7:00



Networking & Community Fair



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COMMUNITY FAIR



St. Louis
Science Center



Great Rivers
Greenway



Academy of
Science of St. Louis



St. Louis Arc



St. Louis
MOSAIC Project



St. Louis
AgriBusiness Club



39 North Biking
Club



MoBot
Herbarium



Women in Agtech
Affinity Group



Science Coach



St. Louis
Zoo



Danforth Center
Young Friends





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RAFFLES!



\$1,000 towards an organizational Membership to the Hub at 39 North!



Fox Club Tickets & Parking to Death Becomes Her
Courtesy of Bayer



Supporter Tickets to a City SC Match
Courtesy of St. Louis City SC



Fox Club Tickets & Parking to Great Gatsby
Courtesy of Bayer



Moneta Pitch Club Tickets to a City SC Match
Courtesy of Actalent





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