

2025



THE PLANT SCIENCE FAMILY REUNION

Growing the future, together.



August 21



Missouri Botanical Garden

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

We'll kick off the Family Reunion by sharing why St. Louis is THE place for agtech and plant science innovation.

Rediscover St. Louis.

9:30 – 9:45



Matt Homann
Filament

Discover how great science grows faster when individuals and organizations think beyond their silos.

Connect across boundaries.

9:45 – 9:55

Job Seeker Talk

9:55 – 10:05

Job Seeker Talk

10:05 – 10:25

Networking

10:25 – 10:50



Dr. Nigel Taylor
DDPSC

See how virus-resistant cassava is moving from Danforth labs to African farms through global partnerships.

Local collaborations with global impact.



10:50 – 11:15



Dr. Tessa Burch-Smith,
DDPSC

Learn how advanced microscopy can diagnose viral infections in plants, tracking movement through plasmodesmata - tiny cell channels.

Rethink how we use scientific tools.

11:15 – 11:40



Dr. Abby Stylianou
SLU

AI is making waves in agriculture, but not every tool fits every problem. Explore case-studies and why thoughtful, context-driven AI matters.

Choose tech with purpose.

11:40 – 12:05



Dr. Lúcia Lohmann
Missouri Botanical
Garden

From conservation to herbarium digitization, Learn how MoBot builds upon deep botanical roots to safeguard biodiversity & empower scientists.

Shaping tomorrow's nature city.

12:05 – 1:10

Lunch & Resource Fair

Network and learn about the many scientific and civic resources that exist across St. Louis

1:10 – 1:20

Job Seeker Talk

1:20 – 1:45



Dr. Stephanie Gamez &
Matt Helms
Aragene

Learn how to turn a science idea into a testable, minimum viable product.

Spot what's worth scaling.

1:45 – 2:10



Jim Hedges
CoverCress

Discover how to set a vision, scale your product, engage customers, and turn a prototype into a business.

Commercialize with purpose.

2:10 – 2:35



Tania Seger
Plastomics

Understand funding ladders and how to strategically raise capital across the lifecycle of a science-based company.

Without funding, nothing scales.

2:35 – 3:00



Nick Reinke
HabiTerre

Explore how to build in an emerging market—where the rules are unclear, demand is forming, and execution may matter more than perfection.

Don't let perfect be the enemy of good.

3:00 – 3:20

Networking

3:20 – 3:30

Job Seeker Talk

3:30 – 3:40

Job Seeker Talk

3:40 – 4:05



*Dr. Miguel Vega-Sanchez,
Bayer*

Explore how global regulatory strategy, science advocacy, and stakeholder alignment shape what innovations make it to market.

It's more than science, it's a license to operate.

4:05 – 4:30



*Dr. Michaela McGinn
United Soybean Board*

Getting tech to the field isn't just about data—it's about trust. Learn how relationships, timing, and communication drive farmer adoption.

Just because you built it doesn't mean they'll come.

4:30 – 4:55



*Dr. Sydney Scott,
WashU*

Unpack how moral beliefs shape consumer attitudes towards innovation in food systems, especially GMOs.

Learn how you can help shift opinions.

4:55 – 5:00

Closing Remarks

5:00 – 7:00

Networking Happy Hour