

PLANT BIOLOGY

What can I do with this major?

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

PLANT BIOLOGY - MAJOR SUBDISCIPLINES

Anatomy
Biochemistry
Bioenergy
Biophysics
Cytology
Ecology
Ethnobotany
Genetics
Genomics
Microbiology
Molecular biology
Morphology
Paleobotany
Palynology
Physiology
Phytochemistry
Systematics
Systems ecology
Taxonomy

Colleges and universities
Agricultural experiment stations
Research organizations: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
National laboratories
Museums, herbaria, botanical gardens, arboreta
U.S. Department of Agriculture branches:
National Germplasm Resources Laboratory,
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service,
National Arboretum, Forest Service, Food and Drug Administration, Soil Conservationist
Federal agencies: Departments of Interior and State, Public Health Service, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Smithsonian Institution, National Park Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy
State environmental agencies
Environmental consulting companies
Industries: petrochemical, chemical, lumber and paper, pharmaceutical, seed and nursery, produce, biological supply, and biotechnology

Develop organizational and laboratory skills, attention to detail and determination for successful scientific inquiry.
Understand how to use ArcGIS.
Read plant biology journals and articles to stay abreast of current research in the field.
Seek undergraduate field and research experiences independently or alongside professors.
Apply for undergraduate research fellowships or other student research programs.
Learn federal and state government job application processes.
Join related professional associations.
Maintain a high grade point average and develop strong faculty references in preparation for graduate school.
Obtain a Ph.D. for teaching and advanced research positions.

APPLIED PLANT SCIENCE

Agronomy
Biotechnology
Economic botany
Food science and technology
Forestry
Horticulture
Natural resource management
Plant breeding
Plant pathology

Colleges and universities
Agricultural experiment stations
Research organizations
Federal, state, and local government and regulatory agencies
Agriculture industries: lumber and paper, seed and nursery, fruit and vegetable growers, fermentation, food and feed, biological supply
Industries: petrochemical, pharmaceutical, and chemical
Biotechnology firms
Environmental consulting companies

Learn to set up, operate, maintain laboratory instruments and equipment, and monitor experiments.
Develop strong communication skills for sharing data with technical and non-technical audiences.
Seek undergraduate research opportunities independently or with professors.
Take courses related to your area of interest; consider a minor or double major.
Gain relevant experience through student organizations, volunteer positions, part-time work, or internships.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

APPLIED PLANT SCIENCE CONTINUED

Obtain a Ph.D. for teaching, advanced research positions, and administration.
Learn federal, state, and local government job application processes.

ORGANISMAL PLANT BIOLOGY - SPECIALTIES

Bryology
Lichenology
Pteridology
Mycology
Phycology/Marine botany
Dendrology
Agrostology

Colleges and universities
Agricultural experiment stations
Research organizations including NGOs
State and federal agencies: Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Health
Museums, herbaria, botanical gardens, arboreta, aquaria
Environmental consulting companies

Become familiar with laboratory procedures and equipment.
Take courses in area(s) of specialization and/or consider an advanced degree.
Assist a professor with research or find a part-time job in a laboratory.
Seek related experience through part-time jobs, internships, or volunteering.
Obtain a Ph.D. for teaching and advanced research and management positions.

EDUCATION

Teaching
Research
Administration

Public and private high schools
Colleges and universities
Museums, herbaria, botanical gardens, arboreta

Gain experience working with students through tutoring, part-time employment, or volunteering.
Learn to work well with all types of people.
Develop excellent interpersonal and public speaking skills.
Certification is required to teach in public schools and varies by state.
Master's degrees may be sufficient for teaching at two-year institutions.
Ph.D. is needed for teaching opportunities at colleges and universities.

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STRATEGIES

PLANT BIOLOGY - COMMUNICATION

Writing
Editing
Botanical illustration
Photography

Publishing companies: newspapers, magazines, books, and textbooks
Professional associations
Scientific and educational software companies
Non-profit organizations

Develop strong writing skills, knowledge of photography, and accompanying technology.
Pursue courses in photography; courses in illustration and printing may be helpful.
Take advanced courses in technical writing or journalism classes or consider a minor in either.
Join professional associations like the National Association of Science Writers.
Seek related volunteer or paid experiences with student/local publications, magazines, newspapers, or publishers to increase marketability.
Obtain an advanced degree in scientific journalism.

PLANT BIOLOGY - LEGAL APPLICATIONS

Lobbying
Regulatory affairs
Science policy
Patent law
Environmental law
Agricultural law
Biotechnological law

Environmental and biotechnology law firms
Factories and large corporations
Government and regulatory agencies
Lobbying firms

Participate on a debate or forensic team.
Develop strong research and communication skills and attention to detail.
Take courses in and gain experience with mediation and conflict resolution.
Get involved with pre-law organizations.
Obtain part-time work in law firms and/or internships in federal or state government.
Plan to shadow attorneys to learn more about the field and various specialties.
Maintain an excellent grade point average and secure strong faculty recommendations to gain law school admittance. Plan to take the LSAT.
Earn a J.D. degree to practice law.

BUSINESS

Marketing/Sales
Management
Consulting

Pharmaceutical companies
Agricultural companies
Biotechnology firms
Scientific publishers
Biological supply houses

Develop excellent communication and interpersonal skills, along with a high energy level.
Obtain sales experience and/or a business minor for increased marketability.
Join related student associations and seek leadership positions.
Consider an MBA or Professional Science Master's for advanced management and consulting opportunities.

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STRATEGIES

BIOINFORMATICS

Agriculture
Biomedical
Biotechnology
Computer information science
Medical technology
Pharmaceuticals
Proteomics

Colleges and universities
Private research foundations
Independent laboratories: agricultural, pharmaceutical, research, testing, etc.
Federal laboratories and regulatory agencies:
National Institutes of Health, Food and Drug Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture
Bioinformatics companies
Computer science departments
National Biological Information Infrastructure

Develop areas of specialization through coursework, minors, double-majors in mathematics, statistics, computer science, or machine learning.
Develop strong programming and database management skills; fluency in several programming languages is helpful.
Learn biological software systems.
Complete an internship in area of interest.
Seek master's degree for increased advancement opportunities.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Bachelor's degree qualifies one for work as a laboratory technician or technical assistant in education, industry, government, museums, parks, and gardens.
- Master's degree is needed for many technical positions in research and administration.
- Ph.D. is required for most advanced research and administrative positions or college teaching.
- Build good relationships with science professors and secure strong recommendations. Maintain a high GPA for graduate school admission.
- Obtain part-time, summer, co-op, volunteer, or internship experience with government agencies, college/university labs, agricultural experiment stations, freshwater and marine biological stations, or private companies.
- Complete one or more undergraduate research projects to explore specific areas of interest in plant biology.
- Maintain physical stamina if planning to conduct research in an outdoor environment.
- Join organizations concerned with environmental preservation, world food supply and other related areas. Read scientific journals related to plant biology.
- Develop an excellent background in mathematics and strong verbal and written communication skills.
- Select a broad range of courses in English, social sciences, arts, and humanities.
- Become proficient with computers and software applications.