

## **Work Experience Week at University of Birmingham – College of Life and Environmental Sciences**

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### **Workshop - Are you nuts or going bananas? How plant reproduction sustains us.**

1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 10.30 – 11.30  
Delivered for 12 students of year 11 and 12

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The College of Life and Environmental Sciences receives a high number of requests for work experience placements each year for seeing the types of work that take place behind the scenes (especially lab work). This year is the second Work Experience Week in which 12 year 11 and 12 students have spent a whole week in the College. Some activities, workshops, talks, lab sessions and 2 one-day research projects have been prepared for them, plus a visit to the Lapworth museum and Genomics laboratory. I delivered a workshop about plant reproduction and the COMREC aims.

We reviewed bullet points of plant sexual reproduction, plant products and meiosis covered in some slides and quizzes. Each student had to extract DNA from a strawberry and we went through the process of DNA analysis to the final visualization, for which we used a cold UV light transilluminator.

The relationship between plant products and our way of living was highlighted with a guess game and we linked it afterwards to Food Security by playing a 'The prize is right' game with figures of world population and arable land. Basic and applied research and the need to connect them with companies needs were explained in a couple of slides in which I showed some pictures of my cytology work in the lab. Finally, each student had the possibility to do a squash of meiotic tissue in *Brassica oleracea* anthers. They dissected the buds, selected an anther, prepared a slide and visualised it in the optic microscope. Some closing remarks and questions were made about meiotic recombination and its relationship with crop breeding and food security.

