



The North East Region Analytical Science Community working together to inspire the public on the role of plant poisons as part of an RSC Outreach project.

Aug 16, 2023 13:21 BST

Poison project wins Northumbria University Chemistry and Forensic Science team an award

An innovative project led by Northumbria University's Applied Sciences Department has won a Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) Inspirational Committee Award 2023.

The prize celebrates the development and delivery of a major initiative that brought chemistry to the public, in collaboration with Alnwick Garden in

Northumberland, called 'Poisons in the Garden'.

Comprising a team of seven, the group called 'The North East Region Analytical Science Community' worked together to inspire the public on the role of plant poisons as part of an RSC Outreach project.

Over one weekend in July 2022, people from different age groups ranging from school children to pensioners, were engaged through interactive and informative activities at Alnwick Garden. These included video reels, word searches, colouring exercises, and a sensory garden experience.

The annual RSC prizes recognise over 60 teams and individuals for their contributions to the chemical sciences and showcase the best cutting-edge work from the industry.

John Dean, Professor of Analytical and Environmental Science at Northumbria University and project lead, said: "It's fantastic that our project was recognized by the RSC."

"Focusing on poison is so interesting to anyone involved with chemistry, and with thanks to the Alnwick Garden we were able to demonstrate and share our knowledge with the public."

"The team thoroughly enjoyed working with staff and volunteers at Alnwick Garden to deliver this chemical sciences event."

Working closely with the Alnwick Garden team, the Northumbria University group made excellent use of the unique facility, leveraging it to present both mythological and factual aspects of poisons and their effects.

Going forward, the team at the Gardens will be using the research and techniques in their drug education programme, when educating older age groups on the pharmacology and psychopharmacology of substances.

Claire Mitchell, Head of Community and Education at the Alnwick Garden, said: "It was a privilege to work with John and his team on this project."

"Bringing science to The Alnwick Garden, in such an inclusive and engaging

way, benefited not only those visiting that weekend but also the many young people who will participate in our programmes in the future.”

“Having the expertise from Northumbria University has helped us bring in new ways to engage young people in drugs education and of course in our Poison Garden tours.”

[The Poison Garden](#), located in the Alnwick Garden, is home to more than 100 toxic, intoxicating and narcotic plants which supported the delivery of the project organised by the team at Northumbria University.

The [RSC](#), Royal Society of Chemistry, connect scientists with each other and to society to enable innovations and discoveries. The organisation also encourages teachers and training programme leaders to inspire the next generation of scientists.

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