

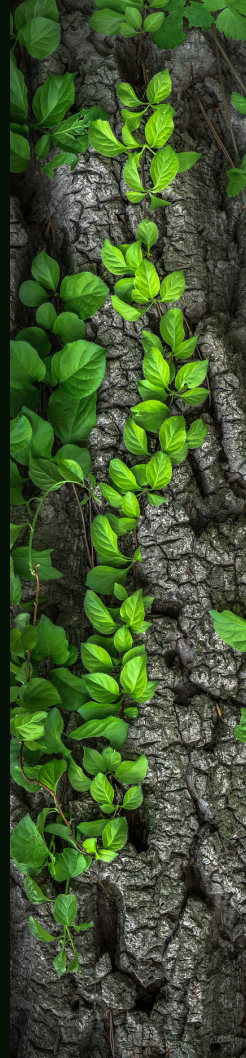


BRITISH ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

The role of plants, fungi and algae in environmental forensics

Botanists have been working on crime scenes since at least the 1920s. Today, the botanical sciences have the potential to play a key role in some criminal investigations. Advances in molecular biology, especially those relating to non-human DNA, mean that investigators should be more able to use environmental trace evidence during an investigation. However, there are still significant barriers, such as cost, to its use in court. Additionally, more 'traditional' approaches such as vegetation fragment identification, are still valuable tools.

Unsurprisingly, the current challenges facing the UK forensics sector are evident in environmental forensics. This talk, by forensic botanist Mark Spencer, will provide an overview of how botany can be applied in the criminal environment, explore more personal observations on the strengths and weaknesses of crime scene management and suggest some options for the future.



Mark Spencer

Mark has been active as a UK botanist for over 30 years. During that time he spent 13 years at

the Natural History Museum, London. While at the museum, Mark received his first forensic botany enquiry and has since been working the sector for a decade.

He is now an independent consultant forensic botanist with casework experience covering murder/ manslaughter, suicide, violent assaults, burglary, arson and counter-terrorism.

Location The Gordon Museum of Pathology, Hodgkin Building,
Guy's Campus, King's College London, SE1 1UL

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