

*Sonal Sachdev
ASPB Ambassador
2025-Year end report*

Hello all! I am Sonal and it is not too long ago that I started serving as an ASPB ambassador. As I reflect upon this one-year-long journey, it has been an absolute pleasure. I learnt many things along the way, essentially, the subtle art of communicating and collaborating with an amazingly diverse group of people. There were about 20-25 people I met with constantly over the 10 meetings throughout the year. Regular discussions were circling around the broader theme- growth of the ASPB community, and designated task groups, such as the Outreach, Blog Writing, and Social Media-related cohorts. I have had the honor to participate in the following tasks, each of which has led to my wholesome growth as a representative of the ASPB community.

Activity 1: Creating a plan

I was initially in the Outreach Program and with Janeen leading this cohort, I would actively volunteer by pouring in ideas and preparing for the PB 2025. I was also involved in the MidAtlantic meeting scheduled for April 2025. There, I spoke with the MidAtlantic ASPB organisers and we discussed how to increase the involvement of more plant scientists and encourage them to join ASPB as active members and support us. Unfortunately, this year due to travel restrictions, I had to hold my in-person participation from these events. But I did learn a great deal about following through, pitching your own ideas, and leading to a constructive mode of action. This first quarter taught me to actively participate in idea exchange and create a roadmap for the execution of plans.

Activity 2: Executing a plan

I got this wonderful opportunity to moderate the 'Meet the ASPB President-Elect Candidates Webinar' in May 2025. I worked closely with Jayson to decide on the script and how to engage the audience for a thorough meeting with the President-elect candidates. As immediate feedback was received from Jayson, Kent, Tessa and Thelma, they seemed to have enjoyed the interactive webinar and appreciated my participation. To evaluate, I am attaching the [YouTube](#) link.

I was initially nervous but eased into the webinar with a couple of minutes and had a truly rejuvenating experience, which encouraged me to further apply to the [2026 Plantae Fellow](#) program and I made it! Its safe to say the ambassadors program opened a new avenue of opportunity to learn and grow.

Activity 3: From start to finish

The ambassador program has begun profiling the SURFers (That's what I call them 😊) to get their perspective on the program and how ASPB can improve and encourage more young minds to apply for this beautifully crafted SURF fellowship. I have currently interviewed three SURFers and have absolutely enjoyed the planning- from script writing to content consent, finalising dates and talking to them. Each had their unique experience, but what I learnt is ASPB's SURF program helped them carve their path as researchers with confidence. I am currently drafting the minutes of the interview and editing the files for submission.

I learnt to design the conversation, conduct an interview Jimmy Fallon style (I tried 😁) and finally a crisp highlight for the SURF profile project.

Finally, I would like to thank Shoshana for guiding me through this Ambassador journey and serving as the most helpful point of contact for a newcomer like myself. I am happy to serve for another year with the ASPB ambassadors, this time focusing on creating an outreach here at NYU to convince more young minds to dive into the fascinating world of Plant sciences.