

Association of Botanical Artists (ABA)
Trustees Annual Report
Financial reporting period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Charity registration number: 1202676

ABA was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 11 April 2023. The Objects of the CIO are:

- i) The advancement of education and
- ii) The advancement of the arts for the public benefit, in particular, in the techniques, artistic merit and science of botanical art with a view to raising awareness of the environment, biodiversity and conservation of the natural world

1. Objectives and Activities

1.1 Summary of purpose as set out in the governing document.

Association of Botanical Artists (ABA) for everyone – everywhere - every ability

The advancement of education and the advancement of the arts for the public benefit, in particular, in the techniques, artistic merit and science of botanical art with a view to raising awareness of the environment, biodiversity and conservation of the natural world.

1.2 Summary of the main activities in relation to the purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts:

To educate a wider international audience about the importance and beauty of plants:

Botanical Art Worldwide (BAWW 2025)

This summary overview relates only to the activities in relation to BAWW 2025 from 1st April 2025; Preparations and planning for the physical exhibition and associated digital exhibitions were undertaken over a period of three and a half years, following the initial proposal received from the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA) in 2021 and led by Elaine Allison (chair) and Alan Cody (creative systems manager and graphic designer/curator).

The theme was designed to draw attention to the vast variety of food and useful plants available, in contrast with the relatively few varieties currently used in mass cultivation.

The UK's exhibition was titled 'Looking back for our future' and featured an exhibition of 34 specially created contemporary botanical artworks and was presented at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Gallery in Birmingham UK, for 2 weeks from 13 to 24th May 2025 and is now permanently online in our digital gallery.

29 images from the UK exhibition were selected and presented for the worldwide online slideshow shown in all participating countries on 18 May 2025 and available on the ASBA You-Tube channel.

ABA audience engagement online

The ABA website remains the main hub of engagement with digital exhibitions, blog posts and membership information, supported by activity across Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. ABA is still reaching way beyond our immediate membership base, judging by the engagement and viewing audiences that have grown during this period.

Blog posts and reviews: 8 book reviews and two reviews of Botanical Art Exhibitions. Average number of views for a post was 607, with a range of 306 to 1180.

- Instagram followers: 8.2k (up from 7.2k followers in April 2025)
- Facebook: 9.2k (up from 8.2k followers in April 2025)
- LinkedIn: 631 (up from 472 followers in April 2025)
- YouTube subscribers: 421

YouTube: A total of 6,038 views across the 6 publicly available videos, up from 5,228 the previous year.

A focus on scientifically accurate botanical art often with an artistic element influenced by the medium:

BAWW 2025: Looking back for our Future: An exhibition focused on biodiversity, celebrating the crops that have been closely associated with the human species over thousands of years.

250 A5 Catalogues were printed from a design produced by Alan Cody which reproduced the 34 juried artworks each labelled with the scientific name of the plant and a short piece of writing about the artwork written by the artist for sale at £12.

On the 18th May, two of the judging panel gave talks about the theme of the exhibition in relation to the artwork on the walls to the assembled visitors.

Botanical chat sessions

Annie Morris and Pam Taylor (volunteers) hosted three 'Botanical Chat' sessions as part of the ABA educational offering to members; held online over Zoom they host up to 20 members at a time and are scheduled to allow for members in different time zones across the world to attend. At the end of February Annie decided to go back to teaching people in real life rather than online, and so stepped down from the role.

June 2025; 3 sessions on Plantaginaceae

An organisation open to all with no pre-requisite for membership:

Any UK based botanical artist was welcome to submit artwork for BAWW 2025, without needing to be a member of ABA.

Fees for participating in BAWW 2025 were kept at a minimum: £22 per image submission

There were 47 submissions, of which 13 did not meet the criteria at the initial digital judging phase.

The remaining 34 artworks were assembled and judged in real life, prior to being framed for

exhibition at the gallery. The framing was sourced by ABA and carried out by Elaine Allison to keep costs low.

The website and social media channels are all freely accessible to the public online.

Foster relationships with organisations who offer information on plant identification and plant ecology promoting a wider knowledge and enjoyment of the plant kingdom:

ABA worked with the following organisation to help plan and prepare for BAWW 2025 and host coordinated events:

American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA)

Wales Society of Botanical Illustrators (WSBI)

Eden Project

Society of Botanical Artists (SBA)

Royal Botanic Gardens RBG (RBG, Kew)

Birmingham Society of Botanical Artists (BSBA)

Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RSBA)

Demonstrations and talks

Three events celebrating the BAWW 2025 were held:

The Nash Conservatory, Banks Hall, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - A series of talks demonstrations and displays of botanical art coordinated by one of our steering committee members, Diane Marshall. Over 1000 visitors.

The Pierhead, Cardiff, Wales - An exhibition of work from the Welsh Society of Botanical Illustrators together with the International Slideshow. Coordinated by Linda Joseph.

The Eden Project Florilegium Society, Cornwall - A celebration of the Worldwide Day of Botanical Art with artwork from the florilegium and the international slideshow. Coordinated by Jacquie Ashton.

Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Gallery, 4 Brook Street, St Paul's Square, Birmingham B3 1SA.

The physical exhibition was hosted by the team at the RBSA over the two-week period with help from Jeni Neale and Moira Ashby from the Birmingham Society of Botanical Artists. A special day of events was held to coincide with Worldwide Botanical Art Day on Sunday 18 May 2025. For the first time, ABA held a People's Choice vote, for visitors to the exhibition to decide on their favourite artwork and 195 people voted.

An illustrated blog post reviewing the event & the exhibition was posted on our website on May 30th for all to read even if they could not attend.

Collaborate with members to promote and exhibit their work:

BAWW 2025

BAWW 2025 has offered the opportunity for both non-ABA members and members to apply to exhibit their artworks in a gallery setting together for the first time.

Online exhibitions

ABA held two online exhibitions during the period.

The first differed from our usual offering in being much smaller but with more detail as it included written information about each artwork. UK-based botanical artists were eligible to submit works and did not need to be an ABA member.

Botanical Art Worldwide Exhibition 2025 - United Kingdom (excluding Scotland); June 2025-Nov 2025)

34 juried artworks were included

'Inspiration' (Nov 2025-May 2026)

116 artworks were included.

1.3 Statement on contribution made by volunteers

ABA is run by eleven volunteers, with committee members, the education team and social media team and trustees. We were very disappointed and frustrated to receive notice from our insurers that ABA could no longer recruit and work with volunteer committee members from overseas; Committee members and Trustees must be UK based. Contributions of artwork, reviews, blogs and other material are very welcome though from all our members.

There are seven volunteer members on the Education team, who meet approximately every two months. The team produces regular blog reviews on botanical art books, shows, art materials and exhibitions. Eleven posts were made during the period.

There are currently two volunteer members on the social media team, with activity on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.

The committee is made up of members of the social media and education teams, with additional support from two other volunteers.

2. Achievements and Performance

2.1 Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole

In addition to effectively presenting BAWW 2025, the ABA team has been able to consolidate the progress made in the previous year and is continuing to attract new members.

BAWW 2025 has engaged and continues to engage a wide audience, beyond the confines of the current membership base, as does the Social Media output which has a far larger reach than might be expected from a very small charity.

ABA administration and processes

All ABA membership administrative practices have been streamlined to ensure they are secure, data compliant and efficient. The new freelance membership administrator has been able to refine a number of processes and simplify much of the workflow.

Dedicated email addresses for the membership administration and the Treasurer are now operational.

ABA purchased a virtual office space with a charitable organisation The Gateway (Warrington) Ltd. Registered Charity No. 1079865 and this now is the charity's address.

ABA's banking arrangements were transferred from NatWest to Unity Trust Bank, which is far more suitable for our needs; Carol Bliss (Treasurer) and Martin Allen (Chair of Trustees) are the signatories for the account. We still retain the PayPal account which is convenient for our overseas members to use for paying their membership fees.

Committees, volunteers and trustees

At the beginning of the year the charity's long-standing coordinator, Elaine Allison, stepped down from the role. We thank Elaine for the many hours she has put into running the charity so effectively to leave it in such a healthy position and for coordinating the BAWW 2025. Martin Allen has stepped into some of the role.

In December, Charlotte Brooks stepped down from being Chair of Trustees. We thank Charlotte for steering us through registering and organising ourselves officially as a charity and giving us a framework from which to continue as Trustees.

During 2026-2027 the Trustees will look to reconfigure the charity by reassessing the digital systems that help us to communicate with members and the wider public as the volunteer, Alan Cody, who set them up is looking to step down from the post. The charity needs to try to recruit further volunteers and to use freelance professionals to cover the gaps in running the charity until we have sufficient volunteers with capacity to help. A number of educational projects have been discussed and can be run in future using the grants from the James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation.

Membership

There continues to be steady growth in membership numbers. As members can join at any point during the year, there is always a fluctuation in membership numbers throughout the year. At any given time, there may be approx. 10 memberships pending whilst payment is due.

April 2023: 250 members, representing 33 countries

April 2024: 321 members, representing 40 countries

April 2025: 331 members, representing 40 countries

March 2026: 359 members, representing 42 countries

3. Financial review (see Accounts for full details)

ABA's main source of funding continues to be via membership subscription and charitable grants. a big thank you must go to the James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation who generously supported the BAWW 2025 exhibition and once again donated £15,000. The Foundation's continuing support and the personal support of our Patron Dr Shirley Sherwood really is appreciated.

ABA is in a very good financial position, with sufficient reserves to pay for freelance* and contractor support within carefully defined parameters.

*Membership secretary: £2,278

Gross annual income for the year to 31 March 2026: £26,615 which includes a donation of £15,000 from The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation.

Current annual operating costs for the year to 31 March 2026: £6,618

(The Trustees agreed the donation of £15,000 be used toward special projects where possible and various educational projects were discussed that can be started once there is sufficient capacity to do so. It was noted that some money may need to be used to upgrade our digital systems.)

Current account as of 31 March 2026 £68,445, compared to 31 March 2025: £48,368

Management, risk and mitigation

The Trustees have adopted a risk management procedure using a risk register, reviewed annually by Trustees or as required.

There are two areas of risk that the charity continues to address: maintaining sufficient volunteer support to carry out the function of the charity and its administration; changing legislation regarding financial administration of not-for-profit membership organisations, particularly with an international subscriber base. Accurate data can be obtained as required for financial and regulatory purposes.

4. Reference and administrative details

Charity Name: Association of Botanical Artists (ABA)

Charity number: 1202676

Charity's principal address: The Gateway, 85 Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1SR

5. Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Martin J. Allen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'A'.

Name: Martin Allen

Position: Chair of Trustees

Date: 1 September 2026