

FUTURE “PLANT DOCTORS” REPRESENT THE CTHB IN UP WITH SCIENCE WINTER WEEK

Five Grade 11 learners participating in JuniorTukkie and the University of Pretoria’s science enrichment programme, UP with Science, once again joined forces with FABI’s DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB) to experience hands-on scientific research unlike what they are taught at school! The group teamed up with staff and students in the CTHB who have since February taught them the work done in a research laboratory. The learners presented their mini research project at the SciEnza Auditorium in front of their parents, teachers, project leaders and fellow UP with Science participants on July 1. The day also marked the end of Winter Week – the period set aside for different learners in their respective groups to put together their scientific presentations.



The learners in the CTHB group delivered their presentation, “The life and times of *Syzygium*



and *Eucalyptus*: From a small wound to a dead tree”, which they had prepared under the supervision of Dr Markus Wilken and postgraduate students Juanita Avontuur, Arista Fourie, Palesa Madupe and Benedicta Swalarsk-Parry. Their project focused on the effects that human-induced stresses such as

wounding had on the health of two tree species – one indigenous and the other exotic. Because the wounding made the trees susceptible to infections by pathogens, the group sought to identify the different pathogens that infected the trees, track the onset and progression of disease as well as their level of immunity and to determine the effect of the different pathogens on the respective tree species.



Nine departments in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences took part in the UP with Science programme and they were represented by different groups of Grade 11 learners. With big doses of humour and creative flair, the groups displayed the different applications of science in our daily lives in

presentations that at times had the audience in stitches. The diverse presentation themes illustrated the “beautifully complex” nature of science referred to by Professor Marietjie Potgieter in her opening address. The CTHB was represented by Grade 11 learners Ummi Kulthum Moosa, Amogelang Sedibe, Prevail Sithole and Zené Smit. Seyuri Rajaruthnam could not take part because she was still writing her mid-year exams.

