

Rūta Urbonaitė

CONTACT INFORMATION

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EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC DEGREE

2026 – now	Natural sciences area Ecology and Environmental Science field (N 012) PhD studies (Vilnius university and Nature Research Centre). Research theme: „Fungal Diversity in Grassland and Coastal Sand Dune Habitats: Ecology, Indicator Value, and Conservation Significance”, scientific Supervisor – dr. R. Iršėnaitė. Research area: CHEGD fungi; fungal biodiversity and distribution; fungal populations and communities in grasslands; habitat management optimization and conservation; plant–fungus relationships and ecological interactions; sand dune and coastal fungi.
2024 – 2026	Vilnius University, Biological diversity / Master. Master thesis: “Grassland fungi in Lithuania: diversity, ecology, and environmental significance”. Thesis did at mycology laboratory, Nature Research Centre. Research area: grassland fungal populations and communities; threatened and declining fungal species; assessment of grassland biological value using fungi as bioindicators.
2020 – 2024	Vilnius University, Biology / Bachelor. Bachelor thesis: “Gasteroid fungi in Lithuania: diversity, distribution, and ecology”. Thesis did at mycology laboratory, Nature Research Centre. Research area: mycology; gasteroid fungi; biodiversity; ecology. Acquired professional qualification as a subject teacher.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2025 10 – until now	Junior Laboratory Assistant Department of Botany and Genetics, Institute of Biosciences, Vilnius University.
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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Field of research: biodiversity, distribution, ecology and community structure of macrofungi in grassland and sandy habitats, application and optimization of standardized fungal inventory and monitoring methods, assessment of relationships between fungal communities and soil chemical properties, moisture, vegetation composition and functional groups, identification of key environmental drivers determining fungal community structure and species distribution, investigation of fungal trophic relationships and potential interactions with plants using stable isotope analysis, root microscopy and molecular methods, fungal species identification integrating morphological characteristics and DNA sequencing, application of fungal indicator groups and methods for assessing grassland biological value and habitat condition, and development of practical recommendations for habitat monitoring and management.

INTERNSHIP AND TRAINING

- 2024 02 / 07 Erasmus+ exchange programme internship during the spring semester at Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal University (Turkey).
- 2023 07 / 08 Student summer internship project (P-SV-23-23): “Distribution and ecology of gasteroid fungi in natural habitats of European importance.

PARTICIPATION IN SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES

International scientific conferences:

1. **Urbonaitė R.**, Iršėnaitė R., 2024. Puffballs and related fungi as indicators of grassland condition. – *Norsk symposium i biosystematikk*, Oslo, Norway, October 29–30, 2024.
2. **Urbonaitė R.**, Iršėnaitė R., 2025. Management recommendations for maintaining high biological value grasslands based on fungal bioindicators. – *14th International Conference of Young Scientists – The Young Scientists for Advance of Agriculture (AGRISCI 2025)*, Vilnius, Lithuania, November 26, 2025.
3. **Urbonaitė R.**, Esposito A., Iršėnaitė R., 2025. CHEGD and other grassland fungi: indicators of high-value grasslands. – *26th Nordic Mycological Congress (NMC 2025)*, Lammi, Finland, September 8–13, 2025.
4. **Urbonaitė, R.**, Iršėnaitė, R. 2026. Grassland fungi in Lithuania: Ecology and indicator systems. – *The COINS 2026 Life Sciences Conference*, Vilnius, Lithuania, March 16–19, 2026.
5. **Urbonaitė, R.**, Iršėnaitė, R. 2026. Grassland Fungi: Does the CHEGD Method Work in Lithuania? – *MycoriseUp! Youth in Mycology 7th Edition*, June 5–7, 2026.