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# Curiosities

- 1

**Sheep Grazing Story:** Did you know EMBL used to employ a team of eco-lawnmowers? Scan to find out more! [s.embl.org/sheep](https://www.embl.org/sheep)


- 2

**EMBL History Banners:** To celebrate EMBL's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2024, this series of banners was installed along the road leading to the campus to highlight key points in EMBL's History.
- 3

**Uwe's Orchard:** Named after Bernd-Uwe Jahn, EMBL's Administrative Director (2001 – 2009), as a farewell gift; it provides delicious fruit and a habitat for insects.
- 4

**Boule's Pit:** Dedicated to Christian Boulín, our former Director of Core Facilities (1976 – 2014), who passed away while in his post. It is a tribute to his French origin (boules being a French ball-throwing game), and a play on his name, "Boulín".
- 5

**Staff Association Gardening Club:** This kitchen garden brings together colleagues who share a passion for plants and nature. Together, they cultivate a welcoming, sustainable space to connect, learn, and grow.
- 6

**Panoramic View:** A view over the fields of the Bierhelderhof Farm, with the Rhein Valley beyond. On a clear day, you can see the hills of the Palatine forest in the distance, and even the Vosges, in France.
- 7

**Green Wall:** This is a stunning example of a living wall. It was constructed in 2021, thanks to a grant provided from Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research and turns a concrete carpark into a beautiful wall of colour and life - because we didn't have enough flower beds already.
- 8

**Suzanne Eaton Playground:** The Kinderhaus received new playground equipment thanks to a donation from the family of the late Suzanne Eaton, an EMBL alumna. Scan the QR code to find out more: [s.embl.org/seaton](https://www.embl.org/seaton)


- 9

**Mustafa's BBQ Area:** Named after Mustafa Uyguner our former Head Housekeeper (1993–2024), this gathering spot brings friends and colleagues together beyond the lab because some of the best ideas are shared around a fire!
- 10

**Flood Defence:** This strange looking formation of rocks isn't an old druid meeting place but is part of EMBL's flash flood defences. It slows down the flow of rainwater and was constructed in 2025.
- 11

**Wild Strawberries:** In the summer months, this slope is covered in tiny and tasty wild strawberries.
- 12

**EMBO Green Facade:** Constructed in 2023 as part of an extension to the EMBO building, this facade incorporates climbing plants to improve biodiversity and provides shade to cool the offices during the summer.
- 13

**EMBL Flag Poles:** Did you know that when EMBL flies its member state flags, it means its Council is in session or there is an important political event happening?
- 14

**The Pond:** The highest-rated attraction in all of Heidelberg! (according to Google Maps and a sign of our scientists' sense of humour, if nothing else). Valued for its rich microscopic aquatic biodiversity!

# Trees

- 1

**Portuguese Oak (*Quercus faginea*)**

This oak, known as the Science Tree, connects landscapes and scientific communities. Planted in 2002 with soil gathered from different EMBL sites, it links places through roots. Over the years, scientists have added soil from their home countries, now representing 29 nations. Scan to discover more: [s.embl.org/embo-sciencetree](https://www.embl.org/embo-sciencetree)




- 2

**Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)**

The ginkgo is a living fossil, unchanged for over 200 million years! Its fan-shaped leaves once shaded dinosaurs. Remarkably resistant to pollution and disease, it symbolizes endurance. In autumn, it turns brilliant gold.


- 3

**Oriental Spruce (*Picea orientalis*)**

Native to the Caucasus mountains, the Oriental spruce grows slowly and has a long lifespan. In forests, spruces shape entire ecosystems, sheltering birds and insects.


- 4

**Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)**

Native to California, these giants can grow taller than 90 metres and live for over 2,000 years! Their thick bark resists fire, allowing them to endure. Stand close. Look up. Lose yourself in its fractal patterns.


- 5

**American Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)**

In autumn, sweetgum trees ignite in red, orange, and purple. Their star-shaped leaves and spiky seed balls are unmistakable. Native to North America, they adapt well to new environments. Their resin was once used as chewing gum.


- 6

**Chilean Fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*)**

Named after the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, this bush with its delicate red and purple lantern-like flowers comes from the cool, windy landscapes of Patagonia. Did you know hummingbirds are drawn to its colour?


- 7

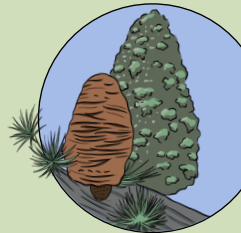
**Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)**

Another sequoia stands here, a reminder of deep time. Their roots spread wide but shallow, often intertwining with neighbours. Strength through community: even giants do not stand alone.


- 8

**Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*)**

From the Atlas mountains of North Africa, this cedar carries the scent of sun-warmed wood. Its sweeping branches create generous shade. Cedars have symbolised strength for millennia.


- 9

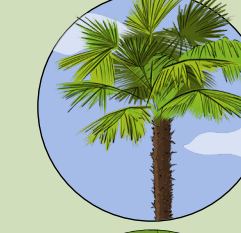
**Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)**

The dawn redwood was once known only as a fossil, until living trees were discovered in China in 1944. A botanical rediscovery story! Unlike most conifers, it sheds its needles in winter. Each spring, soft green leaves return.


- 10

**Chinese Windmill Palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*)**

This hardy palm brings a touch of East Asia to EMBL's gardens. Surprisingly frost-resistant, it withstands colder European winters. It can grow at higher altitudes than most palms, like a traveller that adapted far from home.


- 11

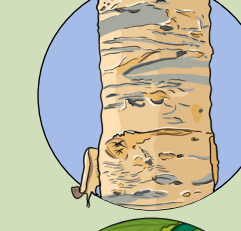
**Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*)**

Magnolias bloomed before bees existed! Their large, fragrant flowers evolved to attract beetles. Fossil records trace them back over 90 million years, placing them among the oldest flowering plants on Earth. Pause and notice the thick petals when they bloom in the spring.


- 12

**Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)**

The paper birch is known for its bright white bark, which peels in thin layers. In northern forests, it reflects sunlight and brightens long winters. Indigenous peoples once used its bark for canoes.


- 13

**Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*)**

With its large, heart-shaped leaves and orchid-like white blossoms, it brings a touch of the exotic to summer gardens. Native to North America, it produces long, slender seed pods, hence its name.


- 14

**European Larch (*Larix decidua*)**

Unlike most conifers, the European larch turns golden and drops its needles in autumn. Native to the Alps and Carpathians, it thrives in cold mountain air. Its wood is strong and durable.



# Artwork

1



**Life-Helix**

Created in 1992 by Swiss artist Thomas Blank, the "Life Helix" hangs outside the Operon in a dynamic spiral. The sculpture reflects the shape of DNA, showing its form and movement.

2



**The "Missing G"**

The sculpture outside the ATC is a farewell donation by former Administrative Director (2001–2015) Keith Williamson. He realised: There is something missing at the ATC...the G!

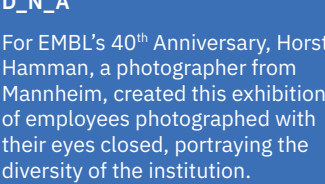
3



**D\_N\_A**

For EMBL's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Horst Hamman, a photographer from Mannheim, created this exhibition of employees photographed with their eyes closed, portraying the diversity of the institution.

4a



**The Sea**

Artwork by the Heidelberg-based artist Mitsuko Hoshino in 2011.

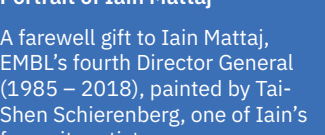
4b



**Portrait of Iain Mattaj**

A farewell gift to Iain Mattaj, EMBL's fourth Director General (1985 – 2018), painted by Tai-Shen Schierenberg, one of Iain's favourite artists.

4c

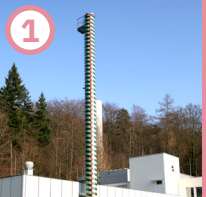


**Noise-Cancelling Panels**

Not only do they help muffle sound, but these panels are also a visual delight created by former EMBL Designer Petra Riedinger.

# EMBL Heidelberg's Scientific Landmarks

1



**Actin Chimney**

A colourful 25 m-high tribute to actin's dynamic filaments celebrates the protein that drives cell movement and structure. The creative painting on the tower results from an internal contest in 2007.

2



**Western Blot Topiary**

This unique stretch of topiary is meticulously maintained to mimic the protein bands of western blots, iconic visuals of protein detection!

3



**Gene Sequence Handrail**

This handrail stands like a DNA sequencing trace with peaks and valleys echoing base signals.

4



**Microscope Slides Facade**

Rows of rectangular glass panes wrap the top floor of the Imaging Centre, mimicking microscope slides used by our scientists and hinting at the science that is being done within.