

ONLY NATURAL DESIGN COMPETITION WINNERS VISIT THE SHOWCASE AT MATERIAL MATTERS LONDON

The Only Natural International Student Design Competition 2025 has announced its seven category winners. The designs are on show at the Material Matters London.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, September 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From seaweed footwear to mycelium vases: new design talent puts natural materials at the forefront

The [Only Natural International Student Design Competition 2025](#) has announced its [seven category winners](#). They converge on London, this week, in a showcase of their work at the Material Matters Fair during London Design Festival.

The competition looks at the environmental crisis created by synthetic, non-biodegradable materials, championing organic alternatives including wool, hemp, wood and leather. In response to fast fashion and disposable design culture, the competition is open to student designers as the generation most capable of driving system-wide change through their careers. The finalists span continents and cultures representing seven countries - the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Israel, India, Japan and New Zealand.

All share a common thread of technical innovation married with environmental consciousness. From Evelina Lavergren's "Biological Footprint" - a revolutionary seaweed-based footwear that disperses seeds while walking, to Yu Watanabe's "Symbiosis Garden" that fuses traditional Japanese urushi lacquer with cutting-edge mycelium biomaterials, the designers demonstrate sophistication in natural material application.



Grant Gibson from Material Matters Fair is one of a number of high profile judges supporting this year's competition.

Mor Elfassy's "Touch Wood" womenswear collection bridges tradition and innovation through leather weave-knitting techniques, while Le Phan Vu's "At Thresholds" dining table reimagines Vietnamese furniture traditions using locally harvested New Zealand Macrocarpa, built entirely without metal components. Other winners include Orla Reilly's "Along the Grain" jewellery collection transforming responsibly sourced cow horn into contemporary wearables, Bingbing Bai's "Eternal Vitality" accessories celebrating the artistry of Tuscan vegetable-tanned leather, and Sriya Reddy's "Swivel" table in natural cherry wood that responds to touch through subtle movement.



Yu Watanabe with her Interiors winning entry "Symbiosis Garden" is among seven international category winners for Only Natural 2025

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*Grant Gibson, design writer,
founder of Material Matters.*

Grant Gibson, design writer, founder of Material Matters and Only Natural judge, said: "We're witnessing a fundamental transformation in how emerging designers approach materials. The quality of work we've seen this year goes far beyond replacing synthetic with natural - these students are reimagining entire design processes around regenerative principles. It's exactly the kind of innovative thinking we want to platform at Material Matters London."

This year's competition attracted nearly 350 young designers, more than doubling participation from its

inaugural year and adding over 550 designer profiles to its growing community of nature-first advocates.

Kerry Brozyna, President of the [Leather & Hide Council of America](#), speaking on behalf of the competition's natural fibre partners added: "The natural fibres industry is energised by this level of student engagement. These designers aren't just using natural materials - they're pushing boundaries. When we see cow horn being transformed into contemporary jewellery or vegetable-tanned leather elevated to modern lifestyle accessories, we know the future of our industries is in capable hands."

Winners will attend the awards ceremony on Tuesday 16 September at Space House, where the overall Fashion and Home category champions will be announced. All work will be on show at the Material Matters Fair [17-20 September] putting them in front of 6,000+ attendees including architects, designers, sustainability advocates and 300+ media representatives.

Only Natural is backed by natural fibre trade bodies including the Leather & Hide Council of America, American Wool Council, American Hardwood Export Council, National Industrial Hemp Council, Mohair Council of America and American Softwoods.



Evelina Lavergren's "Biological Footprint" won the Only Natural 2025 Footwear category

The competition works to inspire the switch to natural materials; and challenges fast fashion, and the material choices we make in the spaces where we live. It asks us to consider impacts from water pollution and air contamination to depletion of natural resources and never-ending textile landfills.

Explore all Only Natural winner profiles: onlynatural.internationaldesigncomp.com and see them in person by registering for Material Matters Fair tickets: <https://registration.icenies.com/material-matters/reg-start.aspx>.

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ABOUT THE ONLY NATURAL 2025 WINNERS

- Apparel winner: Touch Wood by Mor Elfassy. This womenswear collection treads a line between tradition and innovation and blends classic tailoring with natural elements. The designer used traditional materials such as wood, leather and wool, reimagining them through techniques including carving and leather weave-knitting to create a beautiful tension between softness and rigidity.
- Accessories winner: Along the Grain – Tracing Moments of Transition by Orla Reilly. This collection of jewellery and wearable sculptures uses completely natural materials with a strong focus on sustainability. The designer used responsibly sourced cow horn, a byproduct of the meat industry, and combined it with recycled sterling silver to create pieces designed to connect the wearer with nature.

- Footwear winner: Biological Footprint by Evelina Lavergren. This innovative footwear project addresses the environmental impact of traditional shoes by creating a sustainable biomaterial from seaweed. The design is intended to help with ecological restoration by using friction from walking to disperse seeds and nutrients, contributing to regional biodiversity and improving the water quality of the Baltic Sea.
- Furniture winner: At Thresholds by Le Phan Vu. This low-dining table is a contemporary reimaging of traditional Vietnamese furniture, crafted entirely from locally and responsibly harvested solid Macaranga. The designer committed to sustainability by building the piece without any metal components and creating a unique gathering space that honours the Vietnamese diasporic experiences in Aotearoa, New Zealand.
- Interiors winner: Symbiosis Garden by Yu Watanabe. This project explores the synergy between craftsmanship and mass production by creating unique vases from urushi, a natural lacquer derived from trees, and mycelium. This sustainable approach combines traditional Japanese lacquer techniques with emerging biomaterials, celebrating natural growth and fostering a deeper connection to nature through its materials and process.
- People's Choice Fashion winner: Eternal Vitality by Bingbing Bai. This collection of accessories highlights the artistry of vegetable-tanned leather by using it to create modern lifestyle pieces. The designer uses Tuscan vegetable-tanned leather, a byproduct of the European meat and dairy industry, and traditional handmade sewing techniques to highlight the material's natural elements.
- People's Choice Home winner: Swivel by Sriya Reddy. Swivel is a table made from Natural Cherry Wood with a top designed to tell a story through subtle movements that respond to touch. The project in its form and concept reflects a deep appreciation for nature, using an exquisite material to create a beautiful and functional object.

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