

The SS-ASPB

August 2017

Newsletter of the Southern Section of
the American Society of Plant Biologists

TO ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE THE GROWTH OF AND THE WELFARE AND
GOOD FELLOWSHIPS OF PLANT BIOLOGISTS GENERALLY...

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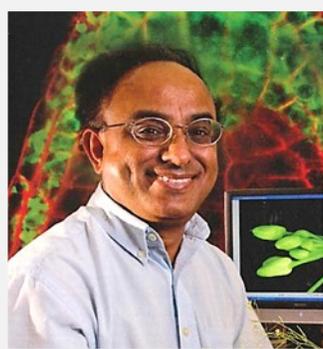
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Greetings from Dr. Nihal Dharmasiri 2017-2018 SS-ASPB Chair

Greetings my Southern section ASPB friends! Looking back at last year's progress, we had a wonderful SS-ASPB meeting in Orlando, Florida. Thanks again to outgoing Secretary/Treasurer Dr. Shahid

Mukhtar and local host Dr. Paul Stephenson for organizing such an outstanding meeting. Those of you who joined us in Orlando might have realized the quality of presentations by our graduate/undergraduate students and other junior and senior speakers. We also had four excellent symposium speakers, Dr. Karen McGinnis (Florida State University), Dr. Keith Slotkin (Ohio State University), Dr. Hong Qiao (UT, Austin) and Dr. Scott Michaels (Indiana University) who discussed their latest research at the Kriton-Hatzios Symposium titled - "Epigenetics in Plant Development & Beyond". Those who continue to attend SS-ASPB meetings every year may have noticed how each successive meeting is progressed to be better. If you didn't get a chance to join us in Orlando, momentum is now gathering for our next annual meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana from March 24-26, 2018. This meeting is being organized by incoming Secretary/Treasurer Dr. Aruna Kilaru and local host Dr. Jay Shockey. This will be another great meeting that will be held at the historic Le Pavillon hotel. (Continued on page 2)

(Letter from the Chair, continued)

Several outstanding speakers will talk about the latest developments in their research at the Kriton-Hatzios symposium. Next year's symposium title is "Big data: Next Frontier in Plant Science". Our 2018 meeting in New Orleans will be a great opportunity to meet with your colleagues in the Southern section. SS-ASPB meetings are more student- and post-doc oriented, so please make every effort to bring your graduate/undergraduate students and postdocs to SS-ASPB meetings. Hope to see you all in New Orleans in 2018. Please also don't forget to participate in voting for our new SS-ASPB officers (please see inside for details).

SAVE THE DATE!

SS-ASPB 2018
New Orleans, LA
March 24-26, 2018



Greetings all SS-ASPB members and other interested parties! Please plan to join us for the 2018 annual meeting of the Southern Section of the American Society of Plant Biologists, to be held in the Le Pavillon Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana, March 24-26, 2018. The topic of next year's Kriton Hatzios Symposium is "Big Data: the Next Frontier in Plant Science".



Plant Biology 2017 Meeting Report

By Dr. Rebecca Dickstein, Southern Section Representative to ASPB

The Plant Biology 2017 conference was held June 24-28, 2017 in Honolulu, Hawaii, a beautiful locale. The science presented at the meeting was outstanding and many conference attendees had the occasion to enjoy the beach. For detailed information about the major symposia, concurrent-symposia and posters presented at the conference, the abstracts are available through <http://plantbiology.aspb.org/>. The major symposia were: Away from the Brink – Towards the Sustainable Use of N and P in Agriculture organized by Michael Udvardi, Evolution of Cellular Development organized by Liam Dolan, The Chemical Dictionary of Plants: Origin and Translation organized by Natalia Dudareva and Eran Pichersky, Plants and Fungi: Friends or Foes organized by Barbara Valent, and Plant Scientist: Entrepreneur organized by ASPB President Sally Mackenzie.

National and international opportunities and issues facing ASPB as a scientific society were discussed at the Council meeting and at the Membership committee meeting. Among significant society news is that two long-term ASPB projects have launched. The first of these is *Plant Direct* ([http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)2475-4455](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)2475-4455)), which launched June 28, 2017 with Ivan Baxter as Editor-in-Chief. *Plant Direct* is a third ASPB journal after *Plant Physiology* and *Plant Cell* and is a joint project with the Society for Experimental Biology (SEB) and Wiley Publishers, publishers of *The Plant Journal*. *Plant Direct* is an open-access journal and publishes papers submitted directly to the journal as well as manuscripts referred from editors of the societies' journals. The second piece of ASPB news is that *Plantae*, The Digital Ecosystem for the Plant Science Community (<https://plantae.org/>), is now fully functional. All members of the plant biology community are invited to create a profile and begin using this valuable resource.

Other new and continuing ASPB initiatives were also discussed. The ASPB Ambassadors program (<https://aspb.org/membership/aspb-ambassador-program/>) is being tweaked to make tasks and projects undertaken by student, postdoc and industry Ambassadors on their respective campuses and in their scientific communities more clearly defined. The Conviron Scholar program (<http://aspb.org/awards-funding/aspb-awards/aspb-conviron-scholars-program/>) for graduate and undergraduate students has launched and applications for the program are due by August 11, 2017. Lastly, the ASPB Legacy Society was initiated. You may read about the Legacy Society in a recent ASPB newsletter here: <http://aspb.org/newsletter/archive/2017/MayJun17.pdf>. The ASPB Board of Directors started the Legacy Society by reaching out to previous ASPB supporters and asking them to each contribute \$5000 to ASPB to kick-start a fund-raising drive. So far, about \$400,000 has been raised. It will be used for education, professional development and other ASPB missions. ASPB members may join by making a donation via <http://my.aspb.org/get-involved/donations> or by contacting ASPB.

Plans are well underway for Plant Biology 2018 to be held July 14-18, 2018 in Montreal, Canada. Registration and abstract submission will open in fall 2017.

2017 SS-ASPB Elections

Elections for 2018-2019 SS-ASPB officers will be happening shortly. Ballots will be sent out via email, so keep an eye on your inbox! The candidates for the position of Secretary-Treasurer are Dr. Magaly Rincón-Zachary and Dr. Mautusi Mitra. Their biographies are below.



Dr. Magaly Rincón-Zachary is a Professor of Biology at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, TX. She received both her M.S. and Ph.D. in Plant Physiology from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1985. Her doctoral thesis work focused on the control of calcium influx in corn roots in response to injury under the direction of the late John B. Hanson. From there, Dr. Rincón-Zachary began her postdoctoral work as a research associate in the Botany department at North Carolina State University under Dr. Wendy Boss's mentorship, and, later, with the Noble Foundation, studying aluminum partitioning patterns in wheat roots. In 1992, she accepted a faculty position in the Biology department at Midwestern State University in Wichita

Falls, Texas. For 20 years her research primarily focused on aluminum partitioning in root tissues and on the role of calcium on the differential aluminum sensitivity observed in roots and has published several articles on this subject. More recently, she and her students have been studying the role of melatonin in the germination of photoblastic tobacco seeds and identifying bacterial endophytes present in seeds containing various melatonin levels.

Dr. Rincón-Zachary served as the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator from August 1999 until August 2013. She has advised and directed master's thesis work for 16 students, many of whom, have gone to pursue doctoral degrees. In 2005, she spearheaded and directed an undergraduate research program titled "Undergraduate Research Opportunities and Summer Workshop (UGROW)" in the College of Science and Mathematics, which in 2013 became a part of the university's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Currently, she serves as the Director for the Office of Undergraduate Research at Midwestern State University overseeing two programs, UGROW and EURECA (Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities), aimed at institutionalizing undergraduate research. As Director for Undergraduate Research, she developed a research course titled, "Creative Inquiry: Interdisciplinary Thinking," and continues teaching Biology at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. She has been a member of ASPB since 1982.



Dr. Mautusi Mitra is currently an Associate Professor of Biology at University of West Georgia. She received both her B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in Botany from the University of Calcutta in India. She earned her Ph.D. in Plant Biology in 2003 from Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, under the supervision of Prof. James V. Moroney. Dr. Mitra's postdoctoral research with Prof. Anastasios Melis' at University of California Berkeley (2004-2009) was focused on the identification of molecular components involved in the regulation of the chlorophyll antenna size in *Chlamydomonas*. This work led to the identification of a novel gene TLA1, and resulted in a patent, which is being utilized commercially.

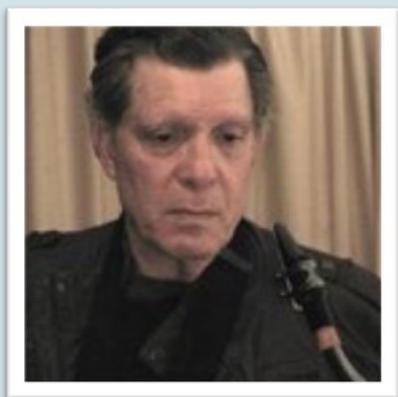
At UWG, her lab employs functional genomics to identify and characterize molecular components involved in photo-acclimation, photo-protection and photosynthetic pigment metabolism in *Chlamydomonas*. Dr. Mitra's research program primarily recruits undergraduates, graduate (MS) and, high school students. She has trained more than 50 research students; many of them are minority students funded by the Georgia-Alabama LSAMP, Uwise & SEEP, and UWG SRAP programs. Many of her students are pursuing successful STEM careers. In 2012, Dr. Mitra received a visiting research fellowship to conduct summer research with Prof. Bernhard Grimm (Humboldt University), and the Women's Young Investigator Travel Award from ASPB. She received the Excellence in Research Award, and, the Excellence in Teaching Award, for outstanding excellence in student success from the UWG College of Science and Mathematics in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Dr. Mitra is an elected full member in the Sigma Xi organization and has been an active member of ASPB, including the Southern section, since 1999 .

Plant Biology Trivia



Venus Fly Trap (*Dionaea muscipula*)

- This plant is native to only a small region (~75 mile radius) of North and South Carolina.
- Due to excessive poaching, it is now a felony in North Carolina to remove these plants from the wild. Those found guilty face a maximum penalty of 28 months in prison.
- The closing of the trap is achieved by the creation of an action potential by the trigger hairs that is propagated to the midrib.



Dr. Marc Cohn Retires, Well Sort Of...

(Many thanks to the LSU Department of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology for allowing us to excerpt much of this information from their newsletter of January 2017)

We would like to congratulate Dr. Marc A. Cohn, who has faithfully served in multiple positions for the Southern Section ASPB for many years, on his retirement from Louisiana State University. Dr. Cohn retired in 2016 as Professor of Seed Biology/Crop Physiology in the Department of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology. Thankfully, he plans to continue in a leadership role for the SS-ASPB. We are extremely fortunate and grateful for the service, dedication and loyalty that Dr. Cohn has shown to the SS-ASPB.

As a long-time member of SS-ASPB leadership, Dr. Cohn has served on many organizing committees and as an officer, including as Chair in 1990-1991. Currently he is a key member of the Financial Oversight Committee. In that role, Dr. Cohn oversees the long-term care of SS-ASPB funds, and provides detailed review of annual budget reports. Those who have served as Treasurer of the Southern Section have learned that some of the sweetest words in the English language can be “your report is now Cohn-approved”. Some years ago, Dr. Cohn was instrumental in working with other SS-ASPB leadership to take our section from having essentially zero capital to what is now a very healthy funding base. His contributions to the Society were recognized with the SS-ASPB Distinguished Service Award in 2001.

Dr. Cohn is a world authority on weed seed dormancy and recalcitrant seed biology. At LSU, he taught two courses annually: Seed Physiology and Professional Development for Plant Scientists. The latter course provided time-tested strategies for conducting successful research: how to formulate a good question; how to find background information related to your research; how to stay current with the literature; how to create a logical series of experiments; how to construct a manuscript/talk/poster; how to evaluate what you read; how to edit and/or review a manuscript; and how to integrate your findings into the flow of science.

Dr. Cohn’s research and professional service formed his award-winning teaching approach. For 10 years he served as editor-in-chief of *Seed Science Research*. He was the recipient of the prestigious Seed Science Award in 2006 from the Crop Science Society of America, the Tipton Award in 2007 for team research from the LSU AgCenter, LSU’s Sedberry Award for Graduate Student Teaching & Mentoring in 2009, an Alumni Association Excellence in Teaching Award from the College of Agriculture in 2011, the College of Agriculture Teacher of the Year for 2011 (continued on page 7)

(Dr. Marc Cohn Retires, continued from page 6)

-12 and Tiger Athletic Foundation President's Award for Distinguished Teaching in 2015.

Dr. Cohn has published over 100 research papers, book chapters and scientific abstracts, and was a recipient or co-recipient of grants funded for more than \$5 million. He is a member of the Weed Science Society of America, Crop Science Society of America, the Association of Official Seed Analysts, a life member of the American Society of Plant Biologists and a charter member of the International Seed Science Society.

In retirement as an Emeritus/Adjunct Professor, Dr. Cohn will continue to offer his Professional Development course, write scholarly articles and be available for student consultations. Dr. Cohn is also known to some as Dr. Jazz, and his "Gifts & Messages" radio show will continue to air each week on WHYR-FM in Baton Rouge and as a syndicated show on many Pacifica Radio Network (<http://pacificanetwork.org/>) stations in the United States. Many of the show archives are also available at www.mixcloud.com/drjazz. Advance warning: his saxophones are out of the closet and could appear publically at any time in the future.

If you wish to recognize Dr. Cohn's retirement with a gift, contributions to the PPCP Max & Lee Cohn Endowment in honor of his retirement are greatly appreciated (please make checks payable to LSU Foundation.)

Fun Eclipse Facts



For those eagerly awaiting this month's total solar eclipse, here are some fun facts from Michael Bakich of Astronomy Magazine.

- This is the first total solar eclipse in the continental United States in 38 years.
- Totality will travel a path from Oregon to South Carolina, crossing twelve states.
- Totality will reach a maximum of 2 minutes and 40.2 seconds in Giant City State Park, Illinois.
- A drop of 10°-15° F in temperature is not uncommon during totality.

Cover Image

V0024739 Astronomy: the corona of the sun, viewed during a total solar eclipse

Credit: Wellcome Library, London. Wellcome Images images@wellcome.ac.uk <http://wellcomeimages.org> Astronomy: the corona of the sun, viewed during a total solar eclipse. Process print after a photograph, 1871. 1871 after: D.J. PoundPublished: -

We're on the web!
<http://ss-aspb.org/>



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