



The SS-ASPB

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

November 2025

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

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From the 2025-2026 SS-ASPB Chair:

Dear SS-ASPB Community Members,

In these uncertain times, our regional societies and conferences are more important than ever to bring us together to share ideas,

celebrate our efforts, and work to ensure a vibrant research community in the future. The ssASPB community showed itself to be alive and well this year at our 86th annual meeting on the beautiful campus of NC State in Raleigh. This year, we received support from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, Cotton Incorporated, NC State University, and ASPB national. Our thanks to all of them for helping with travel and presentation awards, as well as keeping registration costs reasonable for our students.



Across our morning general sessions, three afternoon concurrent sessions, as well as a combined graduate and undergraduate poster session we learned about the exciting research going on in the plant sciences across the southeast at multiple career stages. Our annual Kriton Hatzios Symposium theme was gravitropism and our invited speakers: Simon Gilroy (UW-Madison), John Z. Kiss (Florida Tech), and Sarah Wyatt (Ohio University) anchored each day with fantastic presentations highlighting their research in this exciting area.

Recognizing that our regional meeting has always served to introduce the next generation of plant scientists to our community, this year we hosted a career panel with

professionals from academia, industry, and government labs to discuss their experiences and opportunities. Thanks to all our participants, this event was well received, and we will try to make similar professional development panels a regular part of our regional meetings in the future. Thanks also to our regional organizers (Amanda Storm and Colleen Doherty) and all the volunteers who made this event run so smoothly.

Over 100 undergraduates, graduates, postdocs, and faculty as well as researchers from government and industry assembled for one of our best attended meetings in recent memory. For many of us this meeting is one we look forward to all year and it was wonderful to see so many new faces. We hope most of you will continue to join us for years to come. With that goal in mind, the board plans to return to the practice of planning conference sites 2-3 years in advance and with a closer eye on the dates of other conferences throughout the region which we know many of you also attend. Finally, this year the board will evaluate the investment portfolio of our regional society to achieve a long-standing goal of achieving free registration for our students to this meeting.

I hope to see all of you for our 87th meeting March 13 & 14th in Louisiana!

Andrew Palmer (2025-2026 SS-ASPB Chair)

Save the Date 87th Annual Meeting March 13-14 2026



Lafayette, Louisiana

Kriton Hatzios Symposium

“Seeing Plants Across Multiple Dimensions”
*Exploring the use of modeling, imaging and
visualization in plant science.*



2025 86th Annual Meeting Recap

The 86th Annual Southern Section ASPB Meeting was held March 28–30, 2025, at NC State University’s Hunt Library in Raleigh, NC, bringing together nearly 150 attendees, a sold-out crowd, and one of the largest in recent years. The meeting continued its tradition of highlighting research across the full breadth of plant biology, from molecular mechanisms to spaceflight biology, while fostering community and collaboration across career stages.

Kriton Hatzios Symposium Highlights

The Kriton Hatzios Symposium focused on the theme “**Gravitropism**”, featuring three outstanding keynote speakers:

- **Dr. John Z. Kiss** (Florida Institute of Technology): “*Growing Beyond the Earth: Phototropism & Gravitropism in Space*”
- **Dr. Simon Gilroy** (University of Wisconsin–Madison): “*Plants on the International Space Station: Do You Really Need Gravity, Water, and Air?*”
- **Dr. Sarah Wyatt** (Ohio University): “*Plants and Gravity: Omics from Earth to ISS*”



Dr. Gilroy’s slide title captures the theme of the Kriton Hatzios Symposium

Session and Panel Highlights

The individual sessions covered a diverse range of topics, including plant-microbe interactions, synthetic biology, gene editing, biology under microgravity, and omics-based approaches in both fundamental and applied plant sciences. In addition to oral and poster sessions, attendees participated in professional development panels on career paths and graduate school opportunities. The awards banquet, held at the JC Raulston Arboretum, gave a beautiful plant-based backdrop to the conference.

Award Winners



Undergraduate Poster Presentation Award Winners: Madison Hamlin, University of South Carolina, Aiken (middle-left), MicKenna Taylor and Lucy Turner, Florida Institute of Technology (middle), and Patrick Cardona-Cosner, NC State University (middle-left). Students are pictured with SS-ASPB Chair Aaron Rashotte and Vice-Chair Andrew Palmer.

Undergraduate Poster Presentation Awards

🥇 1st: Patrick Cardona-Cosner, NC State University – *Optimizing Regeneration and Transformation in *Phytolacca americana* for Expression of a Transgenic Lanthanide-binding Protein (LanM)*

🥈 2nd (tie): Lucy Turner, Florida Institute of Technology – *Potential Involvement of *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* Chromosome 16 in Quorum Sensing*

🥈 2nd (tie): McKenna Taylor, Florida Institute of Technology – *The Use of International Space Station–Derived Mixed Cultures to Improve Plant Growth*

🥉 3rd: Madison Hamlin, University of South Carolina Aiken – *Developing Hyperactive mPing-Based Tags for Targeted Insertion*

Graduate Presentation Awards

🥇 1st: Emma Canaday, Ohio University – *Rad Plants: DNA Damage Responses to Real and Simulated Space Radiation*

🥈 2nd: Bryce Redfern, Florida State University – *Structural Specificity of Sinorhizobium Exopolysaccharides in Infection Thread Formation on Medicago Plant Hosts*

🥉 3rd (tie): Harshita Negi, University of South Carolina – *Decoding the Language of Plants: Green Leaf Volatile Signaling in Arabidopsis and Tomato*

🥉 3rd (tie): Morgan Wynn, Valdosta State University – *Decoding Methyl Jasmonate Signaling in Arabidopsis: GCN2-eIF2 α 's Key Role in Translational Control*



Graduate presentation winners Emma Canaday, Ohio University (middle-left) and Morgan Wynn, Valdosta State University (middle-right)

Second place graduate presentation winner, Bryce Redfern, Florida State University.



Third place graduate presentation winner, Harshita Negi, University of South Carolina receives her award from SS-ASPB secretary Amanada Storm.

Southern Section Student Travel Awards: Joshwa Gandy, Harshita Negi, Madison Cardillo, Marzieh Moradifar, Chaquayla Katam
ASPB Regional Plant Scholar Awards: Dominik-Xavier Holloway, Julia Moreira, Kangquan Yin, Mary Kasayian, Remmy Kasili, Shivani Dharam



Post-Meeting Survey Summary

Survey results reflected strong enthusiasm and satisfaction:

- Over 90% of respondents rated the schedule, physical facilities, keynote talks, and communication as *Excellent* or *Good*.
- Nearly all agreed the meeting was professionally beneficial and indicated they would attend future Southern Section meetings.
- Open feedback highlighted the welcoming atmosphere, sustainability efforts (like reusable kitchenware), and exceptional student support.
- Suggestions for improvement included more space between posters, fewer AV glitches, and additional informal social opportunities.

One attendee summarized it best:

“Terrific meeting—one of the best (and largest) Southern Section meetings in a long time. The sense of community and support for students was exemplary.”

Community Announcements

Have something you want to tell the SS-ASPB crowd? A symposium or seminar coming up? We hope to have more regular newsletters. Please e-mail cjdohert@ncsu.edu or the officers if you have an announcement you would like to share.

Love the Southern Section? Want to see it stay strong?

Consider nominating a colleague, or yourself, for an officer position! We especially encourage post-tenure members to apply so that this service doesn't interfere with promotion progress, but all interested members are welcome to run.

SS-ASPB OFFICERS 2023-2024

Chair	Andrew Palmer	Florida Institute of Technology
Vice-chair	Amanda Storm	Western Carolina University
Secretary	Ying Wang	University of Florida
Treasurer	Ana Alonso	University of North Texas

Executive Committee

Ashlee McCaskill	University of North Georgia
Aaron Rashotte	Auburn University
Colleen Doherty & Representative to ASPB Council & Membership Committee	North Carolina State University

Financial Oversight Committee

Nihal Dharmasiri	Texas State University
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If you are interested in serving on an SS-ASPB Committee or know someone who would be great, please let us know. Now Welcoming Nominations.