



# 2020 Election

## American Society of Plant Biologists

- **Election Procedures:** On the electronic ballot card, mark your choice of candidates for elected office.

### President-elect

(to serve as president 2021–2022)



#### Georg Jander

Adaptability in a changing environment is essential for the long-term relevance and success of a member-focused society like ASPB. As we approach our 100-year anniversary, ASPB faces renewed challenges but also opportunities for broadening the impact of the Society and, more generally, plant research. As president of ASPB, I would work to increase and diversify Society membership while

also ensuring that we remain relevant as a home for both basic and applied plant scientists. With ongoing ecological changes and demands for increased agricultural productivity, communicating the essential nature of plant research, related infrastructure, and human capital to our funding agencies, in Congress, to potential donors, and elsewhere is a central function of ASPB and, in particular, its leadership. In the face of ever-increasing competition among publishing options for plant scientists, we must focus on maintaining the leading position of ASPB journals and their function as a source of income for the society. Finally, I would see my role as ASPB president as being that of a cheerleader promoting the possibilities and excitement of plant science, not only to current and future Society members, but also to the general public.

Although I have been an avid gardener for 50 years and have had individual potted plants in my home and office for more than 40 years, I am a bit of a late bloomer with my vocational interest in plants. After completing an undergraduate degree in computer science at Washington University, I studied *E. coli* disulfide bond formation as a PhD student at Harvard Medical School. Finally, as an NIH postdoctoral fellow at Massachusetts General Hospital, I initiated my research on the chemical ecology of plant-insect interactions, using *Arabidopsis* as a model system. Subsequently, I spent four years studying plant amino acid metabolism at the Monsanto Company (now Bayer Crop Science). In 2002, I became a faculty member at the Boyce Thompson Institute in Ithaca, New York, with an adjunct appointment in the School of Integrative Plant Sciences at Cornell University. With the exception of sabbatical visits at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology in Germany and the Weizmann Institute in Israel, I have been in the same position ever since. In recent years, my lab group has consisted of 10 to 12

postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduates. With funding from NSF, USDA, DARPA, BARD, and the Triad Foundation, I have generated more than 100 publications describing basic and applied aspects of plant metabolism and plant-insect interactions. Current research in my lab involves maize, *Setaria viridis*, and *Erysimum cheiranthoides* (wormseed wallflower).

I have been an ASPB member for almost my entire career as a plant scientist, and the Society has been my main point of contact with the wider plant research community. Among the many membership benefits, I particularly enjoy the ASPB annual meeting, with its opportunities for interactions with other scientists and the wide range of plant research topics that are covered. My past service to ASPB has included contributions as a monitoring editor for *Plant Physiology*, as well as a co-editor for a plant-herbivore interactions focus issue of the journal. Additionally, I have served three-year terms on the Publications Committee and the Program Committee for the annual meeting. Thus, as a potential ASPB president, I am familiar with the organization of the Society and the needs and interests of its membership.

Promoting plant research at an early stage in student careers, and thereby increasing the size and diversity of our potential membership pool, is key to the long-term success of ASPB. In addition to mentoring 62 undergraduates and 27 high school students since starting my own lab at the Boyce Thompson Institute, I have been the lead investigator for five consecutive NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) site grants. Among 213 summer interns in the past 16 years of our program, 44% were underrepresented minority students, 55% were from small colleges without extensive plant research opportunities, and 36% were first-generation college students. In addition to these NSF-funded interns, a similar number of high school and college students with funding from other sources have participated in our summer program, including several with ASPB SURF awards. When I meet former interns in their new roles as graduate students or postdocs presenting research at the ASPB annual meeting, they frequently tell me how their interest in plant science was either initiated or solidified by participation in our REU program. Several of these former REU students are now faculty members, mentoring the next generation of undergraduate plant scientists at the University of Washington, Cornell University, and other institutions. Continued interactions between ASPB and our REU site, as well as similar plant-focused internship programs at places like Michigan State University, UC Riverside, and the Danforth Center, will help to promote the membership, diversity, and continued success of ASPB as it enters its second century.