



2023 ELECTION

American Society of Plant Biologists

ASPB President-elect

(to serve as president 2024–2025)

HONG MA

As we approach ASPB's Centennial celebration, we are mindful of the ASPB missions to promote plant biology research, to train future generations of plant biologists, to support the community of plant biologists, and to disseminate scientific discoveries and insights through publications and conferences. Without a doubt, ASPB has made numerous great accomplishments; at the same time there have been many challenges, just as our broader society makes great advances while suffering clear stalls and even setbacks. ASPB and our plant biology colleagues, as part of human society, once again face global challenges of food shortages, climate change, ecosystem destruction, economic upheavals, world-wide health crises, and even wars and other armed conflicts. Furthermore, even though decades of great effort to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the plant sciences and other communities have made significant progress, recent tragic events have sharply focused our minds more than ever on the need to fight even harder against biases and bigotry. Nevertheless, there is a ray of hope that continued sustained effort can lead to greater changes for the benefit of all.

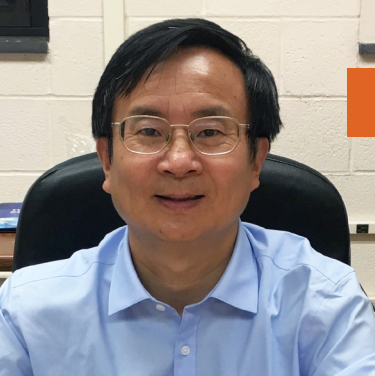
I am a first-generation immigrant and naturalized US citizen. During my career, I have been very fortunate to have the support of many mentors, colleagues, friends, and family, while also having experienced and witnessed biases and bigotry and shared the pain and anger. These experiences have helped me to recognize and appreciate differences among us. Throughout my career, I have worked hard to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, through mutual respect and understanding, and I have supported the training of women and minority students and postdoctoral scientists. In particular, I value opportunities to work with and help promote career development of young plant biologists, including women and underrepresented minorities. I have served as an advisor to many PhD and MS students, as well as postdoctoral scientists. They have advanced in their career paths in a variety of areas, including high school education, various industries, and research and higher education. I am an active member of the Plant Biology Graduate Program at Penn State and contribute to teaching regularly; I have served on the thesis committees of many students in this program. Previously, I was the Director of the Cell and Developmental Biology Graduate Program at Penn State, in which capacity I worked to increase the number of both students and professors, including plant biologists. I have attended the ABRCMS

and SACNAS conferences to broaden my interactions with young scientists of diverse backgrounds. If I am elected as president-elect, a top priority will be to support and train young plant biologists for a community with greater diversity, to further increase the voice of diverse members of our community, and to promote diversity in society leadership and society activities.

Currently I am the holder of the Huck Chair in Plant Reproductive Development and Evolution and a Professor of Biology at the Pennsylvania State University. My lab has studied the molecular genetic basis of plant reproductive development, particularly anther/pollen development and meiosis. We are also interested in understanding phylogenetic relationships among and the evolution of angiosperms, particularly for members of families with species that are important for agriculture and horticulture. These include rice, corn, wheat and others of the grass family; soybean and other legumes; tomato, potato, and others of the nightshade family; cucumber, squash and other cucurbits; as well as apple, pear, peach, strawberry and others in the rose family. These research programs have provided training opportunities for dozens of young plant biologists over the last 30 years. Together, we not only improve our ability to conduct research and communicate the findings with colleagues and the general public, but we also enhance our efforts to work with each other as a team and respect and value each other's differences in experiences and perspectives.

My interests in plants started during the time when I lived in the countryside with exposure to major crops such as rice and soybean and many vegetables and fruits, as well as numerous wild plants. After starting my undergraduate studies at the University of Science and Technology of China, I transferred to Temple University in Philadelphia and completed my BA in Biology and Biochemistry, with valuable research experiences in biochemistry and organic chemistry under the guidance of my professors. My training in molecular genetic analyses was obtained through PhD studies of gene regulation in yeast at MIT. During my PhD, the advances in plant molecular biology, especially the emergence of Arabidopsis as a model system for plant biology, attracted me to seek post-doctoral training under the guidance of Prof. Elliot Meyerowitz, through pioneering research on floral homeotic and heterotrimeric G protein genes.

In 1990, I started my first position as an independent scientist at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, continuing molecular genetic studies of floral and G protein genes. Eight years later, I moved to Penn State and became an associate professor, joining a much larger group of plant biologists at that institution. This environment has provided many opportunities for collaboration and fostered my research in a new area, molecular evolution. Furthermore, greater opportunities



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Hong Ma continued

to work with and train students and postdocs, including women and minority students, made the professional experience at Penn State highly satisfying. From 2008 to 2016, I was Professor and Dean of the School of Life Sciences at Fudan University, Shanghai, focusing on increasing research quality, strengthening graduate student careers, and facilitating international exchange. In early 2017, I returned to Penn State as full-time Professor of Biology and the Huck Distinguished Research Professor of Plant Molecular Biology. In 2018, I was appointed as Associate Dean for Research and Innovation of the Eberly College of Science at Penn State for a term that concluded at the end of 2021.

I have been a member of ASPB since 2000 and have been a member of the ASPB Publications Committee since 2017. I have also served previously as an Associate Editor for *Plant Physiology*. In addition, I have been a frequent contributor to the ASPB journals *Plant Physiology* and *The Plant Cell*, both as an author and a reviewer for manuscripts submitted to these two journals. I consider these as valuable

experiences that inform the responsibility of the president-elect to support the society journals, as they navigate through the current time of great changes in scientific publishing.

During my career, I have been honored with the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2004-2005), the Faculty Scholar Medal in Life and Health Sciences at Penn State (2005), Distinguished Professor in Biology at Penn State (2008) and was elected as a AAAS Fellow in 2010. These recognitions serve as reminders that I should do more to give back to the profession that has supported my career.

All my life I have believed strongly in hard work and dedication to the common good. If I am elected, I will work hard for ASPB, for its members, and for the greater plant biology community, with a great emphasis on the needs of younger plant biologists, and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Let's work together to achieve a more perfect society for all!