Three ASPB Members Elected to National Academy of Sciences

ASPB members June Nasrallah and Michael Thomashow were among the 72 new members elected in April 2003 to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). ASPB member Luis Herrera-Estrella was among the 18 foreign associates elected into NAS. Jonathan Jones was named a fellow of the Royal Society (see story on page 4).

Election to membership in the academy is considered one of the highest honors that can be accorded a U.S. scientist or engineer. ASPB congratulates all three members on this achievement.

June B. Nasrallah

Professor June B. Nasrallah of Cornell University was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and received a B.S. degree in biology from the American University of Beirut in 1971. Her graduate work with Adrian Srb studying reproductive development in Neurospora led her to obtain a Ph.D. in genetics from Cornell University in 1977. After a short tenure as an instructor at the American University of Beirut, she returned to Cornell. In the early 1980s she was a research associate in the Section of Genetics and Development. It was then that she and her husband, Mikhail Nasrallah, initiated a collaboration to study the self-incompatibility response of Brassica. In 1985, she joined the faculty in the Section of Plant Biology at Cornell University as an assistant professor. She was promoted to associate professor in 1991 and to professor in 1997 in the now-renamed Department of Plant Biology.

Nasrallah describes her current research as follows: “My research interests continue to be aimed at gaining a mechanistic understanding of self-incompatibility in crucifers and more generally of pollen–pistil interactions. Our current focus is (1) to investigate the receptor ligand interactions and receptor-mediated signaling that lead to the recognition and rejection of “self” pollen and (2) to study mating system evolution in the crucifer family and the genetic basis of transitions that underlie switches between outbreeding and self mating systems.”

In addition to being a member of ASPB for nearly 15 years, Nasrallah was a monitoring editor of Plant Physiology from 1992 to 1994 and an associate editor from 1995 to 1998.
The ASPB News is now available online as well as in print. Members will be alerted by e-mail when a new issue is posted. The ASPB News welcomes member feedback. Contact the editor at nancyw@aspb.org.

## ASPB Officers & Staff

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- **Southern**: Mel Oliver, 806-723-5225
- **Mid-Atlantic**: Jonathan Monroe, 540-668-6649
- **Western**: Dina Mandoli, 206-643-4335

### Public Affairs

- **ASPB Education Forum**
- **Plant Genetics 2003 Set for Snowbird**


### NOTICE: The ASPB News no longer carries job ads or meeting announcements. Job ads appear online at [www.aspb.org/jobbank](http://www.aspb.org/jobbank). The list is updated every Friday. Meeting notices can be posted at [www.aspb.org/meetings](http://www.aspb.org/meetings).
Michael Thomashow

Professor Michael Thomashow, a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), received his A.B. in bacteriology in 1972 and his Ph.D. in microbiology in 1978, both from UCLA. From 1972 to 1976, he was a predoctoral trainee in the Department of Microbiology at UCLA, and from 1976 to 1978, he was a research assistant in the UCLA Department of Microbiology. He was at Washington State University (WSU) from 1978 to 1986, when he moved from his position as associate professor in microbiology at WSU to associate professor at Michigan State University’s (MSU) Department of Crop and Soils Sciences and Department of Microbiology and Public Health. He has been a professor in that department since 1991 and a member of the MSU–Department of Energy Plant Research Laboratory since 2000.

Thomashow’s research includes the study of freezing and drought tolerance in plants. He is chair of the organizing committee for the 2004 Keystone Symposium on Plant Responses to Abiotic Stress. He was a member from 2002 to 2003 of the Program Committee on Temperature Stress in Plants for the Gordon Research Conference. In 2002, he was a member of the National Research Council, Polar Research Board Committee on Frontiers in Polar Biology. His genomic analysis of freezing and drought tolerance in plants was the subject of a congressional poster exhibit sponsored by ASPB on June 17, 2003, on Capitol Hill.

Luis Herrera-Estrella

Professor Luis Herrera-Estrella, of Centro de Investigacion y Estudios Avanzados, Cinvestav, Mexico, is among the 18 foreign associates selected for election to the academy.

Herrera-Estrella did his undergraduate work from September 1972 through August 1977 at the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City. He continued his education between September 1978 and May 1980 at the Genetics and Molecular Biology Department of Cinvestav, where he received an M.Sc. degree. His doctoral work was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Marc Van Montagu and Jeff Schell from August 1981 through May 1984 at the Genetics Department of the State University in Gent, Belgium, where he then continued his postdoctoral work from May 1984 to March 1986.

Herrera-Estrella is a professor at Cinvestav, a public institute financially supported by the Mexican federal government. Its mission is to carry out research and to train students at the M.S. and Ph.D. levels. The Biotechnology Unit of Cinvestav was created in 1986 to do basic research in plant biology and to apply molecular biology and genetic engineering techniques for the genetic improvement of plant species of economic or social importance for Mexico.
On May 15, 2003, the Royal Society elected 42 new fellows and six foreign members from the fields of science, engineering, and technology. Among those elected was ASPB member Jonathan Dallas George Jones, senior scientist, Sainsbury Laboratory, John Innes Centre, Norwich, United Kingdom.

Jones was credited with several outstanding contributions to the understanding of DNA transposition and disease resistance. His early work provided important insights into the mechanisms underlying the behavior of maize transposable elements and chromosome breakage. He was a joint winner in the race to isolate plant disease-resistance genes, showing that they encode a novel family of recognition proteins of general significance for plant and animal immunity. His work has provided major insights into the evolution of plant disease resistance, showing that the amino acids that are likely to be directly involved in pathogen recognition are hypervariable and under the influence of divergent selection. He has therefore opened up new and exciting avenues for research into plant recognition, signal transduction, and evolution.

Jones attended Peterhouse, Cambridge University, in natural sciences, graduating in 1976 in botany. He obtained his Ph.D. (genetics) in 1980, participating in a CASE studentship at Cambridge University (with Gabriel Dover) and working at the Plant Breeding Institute, Trumpington, Cambridge (with Dick Flavell).

From 1981 to 1982, he was at Harvard University Biological Research Laboratories as a postdoctoral research fellow in the laboratory of Professor Fred Ausubel. Subsequently, he worked as a research scientist at Advanced Genetic Sciences, Oakland, California. Since 1988, he has been employed at Sainsbury Laboratory, where he is now a senior scientist. His projects have included mechanisms of Ac/Ds transposition, the nature and evolution of plant disease-resistance genes, and mechanisms of disease resistance.

Jones served as head of Sainsbury Laboratory from 1994 to 1997 and in 2003 and has been honorary professor at the University of East Anglia since 1997. He was elected into EMBO in 1998 and was recognized by the Thomson Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) as one of the most highly cited researchers in plant and animal biology in 2002 and again by ISI as the second-most highly cited author in plant and animal science for the period 1992–2002.

His international boards and editorial responsibilities include International Society of Plant Molecular Biology board member, 1995–1998; The Plant Journal advisory board 1995–1998; coeditor of The Plant Cell since July 1998; Current Opinion in Plant Biology editorial board, 1997 to present; invited editor for Current Opinion in Plant Biology, Plant–Microbe Interaction issue, 1998; editor of Genome Biology; and co-coordinator of the Plant–Microbe section of Faculty of 1000. In addition, Jones regularly reviews manuscripts and grant proposals for Cell; Nature; Science; The Plant Cell; The Plant Journal; Genes & Development; Genome Research; Nature Genetics; the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; USDA, NSF, and agencies of Israel, Holland, Australia, and Switzerland.

The Royal Society is the world’s oldest scientific academy in continuous existence and has been at the forefront of inquiry and discovery since it was founded in 1660.

Melissa Junior resigned in mid-July as managing editor of Plant Physiology. She will be joining the Publisher Services Division of SPI Technologies as an account executive in charge of new business development. SPI offers a comprehensive set of content production capabilities that include an SGML/XML-first workflow, editorial services, and typesetting and page layout. It serves more than 30 for-profit and not-for-profit scientific journal and book publishers, as well as commercial publishers in related fields, both in the United States and Europe.

Melissa has been with Plant Physiology for more than four years. During this time she has worked closely with her talented staff, editor-in-chief Natasha Raikhel, and the entire editorial board to make the journal—especially Plant Physiology Online—stronger than ever.

We wish her the very best.
ASPB is fortunate to have a strong international segment of more than 1,800 members from 66 countries. The International Affairs Committee (IAC) was formed in 1999 as an ad hoc committee under the leadership of founding chairman Dr. Bob Buchanan, a former ASPB president. Its original goal was to ensure that the Society was adequately serving its foreign constituency. Dr. Buchanan retired as chair on September 30, 2002. Dr. Deborah Delmer, also a past president of ASPB and the associate director for food security, The Rockefeller Foundation, is currently leading IAC. Committee members are Arun Goyal, Kenzo Nakamura, Tuan-Hua David Ho, Adrienne Clarke, Graciela Salerno, and Norbert Sauer.

IAC’s formation was an important milestone considering that the overseas membership continues to increase. The committee is charged with making recommendations to the Executive Committee on international matters, such as how to better serve our international members; it approves and monitors free or subsidized journal subscriptions to institutions that can demonstrate need; it oversees sponsorship of international meetings or workshops and joint meetings; and it addresses other issues concerning our international members. The importance and success of the committee were recognized, and the committee was incorporated into the constitution as an official standing committee in 2002. Information on IAC’s mission, policies, and activities are available through the ASPB web site at http://www.aspb.org/committees_societies/international.cfm.

Some of the responsibilities, activities, and accomplishments of IAC follow:

- IAC is responsible for awarding complimentary and discounted journal subscriptions, meeting registrations, and membership dues for international members. The committee has formulated a policy for granting needs-based free or subsidized online or print-plus-online journal subscriptions and free or subsidized copies of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology of Plants.
- IAC would like to play a more active role in the Corresponding Member Award selection process and encouraging more nominations from developing countries.
- IAC has been working with Dr. Maarten Chrispeels to obtain financial help and information from developing world sources for distributing copies of the textbook Plants, Genes, and Crop Biotechnology. Dr. Chrispeels played a key role in ensuring that a large number of books are provided free of charge to institutions in developing countries.
- The committee continues to work with plant biology–related societies in other countries to encourage and facilitate participation in annual meetings. IAC has made available $5,000 to encourage participation of attendees from developing nations by providing travel grants for Plant Biology 2003. We’re very excited about the 2003 ASPB annual meeting in Hawaii, and we expect to have a large number of attendees from the Pacific Rim countries.
- IAC supported Argentina and other South American countries by providing significant funding toward the Latin American Congress of Plant Physiology, which took place in Uruguay in October 2002.
- Arun Goyal, a member of IAC, helped the Indian Society of Plant Physiology get authorization from the International Society of Plant Physiology for organizing the 2nd International Congress of Plant Physiology (ICPP-2003) that was held in New Delhi, India, January 8–12, 2003. The congress was inaugurated by the president of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam, a nuclear physicist of international repute. The plenary lectures and the scientific sessions were attended by scientists from more than 20 countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Japan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Poland, Israel, the Philippines, the Czech Republic, and Russia. A significant number of ASPB members attended the congress. A total of 14 concurrent symposia were organized that covered a wide range of contemporary plant physiology topics, including abiotic stress, signal transduction, global climate change and plant productivity, phytoremediation and allelopathy, photosynthesis, pre- and post-harvest physiology of flowers and fruits, plant growth regulators, physiology and genetics of plant nutrition, transgenic and functional genomics, intellectual property rights, physiology of plantation, and cash crops. The plenary lectures were delivered by world-renowned scientists such as Drs. Ingo Potrykus, Mark Van Montagu, Arie Altman, Charles Arntzen, Don Ort, Neil Turner, Hideaki Usuda, and Daphne Osborne. World-class congresses like this one inspire research, provide scientists and young researchers with new insights, and showcase the research that is being carried out in developing nations and Indian universities and research institutes to an audience of international scientists.

IAC invites all ASPB members to provide suggestions and new ideas. Kindly send your suggestions to Susan Rosenberry, our committee staff liaison, at the ASPB headquarters (e-mail chambers@aspb.org). We invite you to visit the IAC exhibit at the ASPB booth during Plant Biology 2003 in Hawaii.
**Midwestern Section Holds Annual Meeting**

The Midwestern Section of ASPB held its annual meeting March 21–22 on the campus of Iowa State University (ISU) in Ames. Steve Rodermel, the section’s chair, hosted this successful meeting, which drew more than 120 attendees from 11 states and featured 36 research talks.

The Midwestern Section’s meeting typically emphasizes presentations by graduate and undergraduate students, and this year was no exception. Twenty-three graduate students and seven undergraduates gave talks on their research, with topics including water relations, metabolism, abiotic stress responses, transport, and genomics. Additional talks were presented by several postdocs and faculty.

The meeting this year was held in conjunction with the ISU Integrated Plant Physiology Major minisymposium on “Advances in Abiotic Stress Tolerance.” This minisymposium boasted four talks by well-known experts in this important research area: Hans Bohnert (University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign) spoke about “Microarrays, Models, and Mutants: Dissecting Abiotic Stress Tolerance,” followed by Norman Huner (University of Western Ontario), who spoke on “The Photosynthetic Apparatus as an Environmental Sensor.” During the afternoon, Eduardo Blumwald (University of California, Davis) presented the “Role of Vacuolar Cation/H+ Antiporters in Ion Homeostasis and Plant Salt Tolerance,” and Charles Guy (University of Florida) addressed “Acquired Tolerance to Temperature Extremes: Appreciating the Complexity of the Associated Molecular Responses.” Following the evening banquet, Hans Bohnert presented the 21st Loomis Lecture at Iowa State University, “Plant Transcriptomes in the Lab and the Real World.”

The election for the position of secretary-treasurer was held via electronic ballot in April and early May. Three candidates were nominated via the ASPB web site: Arun Goyal (University of Minnesota, Duluth), Marianne Laporte (Eastern Michigan University), and Richard Sayre (Ohio State University). Professor Sayre was elected and will serve as secretary-treasurer for two years (2003–2005). Karen Koster (University of South Dakota) has now advanced to the position of vice chair, and Allan Showalter (Ohio University) now serves as chair of the section.

Karen L. Koster  
Vice Chair, MWASPB  
Professor of Biology, University of South Dakota

**Northeast Section Holds 67th Annual Meeting**

The 67th annual meeting of ASPB’s Northeast Section was held at Bucknell University on June 6–7, 2003. The meeting began on Friday afternoon with a warm welcome by Dr. Mark Spiro. Following eight oral presentations, mostly by students, there was a social hour and poster session, featuring a variety of snacks, drinks, and 23 posters dealing with a wide range of topics in plant biology. The evening ended with dinner and music at Larison Dining. The NEASPB Executive Committee met from 8:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Most participants met again at the local pub to continue “discussions.”

On Saturday morning, the meeting resumed with a continental breakfast and two more oral presentations. The sessions concluded with the annual symposium, entitled “Recent Advances in Plant Signal Transduction.” Three outstanding keynote speakers for the symposium were Dr. Michael R. Sussman, University of Wisconsin, who spoke on “Genome-wide Analysis of Arabidopsis Plasma Membrane”; Dr. Caren Chang, University of Maryland, “Ethylene Receptor Signaling”; and Dr. Sarah Assmann, Pennsylvania State University, “Transducers of Abscisic Acid Signaling in Guard Cells.” The morning ended with a well-attended business meeting of NEASPB members.

Approximately 75 individuals attended the meeting from a variety of colleges and universities within the Northeast Section. John Lisack, ASPB executive director, represented the national society. We are pleased to note that among the meeting participants were numerous undergraduate and graduate students. The meeting organizing committee acknowledged the financial support of Bucknell University, Addison Wesley Publishers, Prentice Hall Publishers, Sinauer Associates Publishers, and Walz USA, as well as the contributions of several members to the Granick-Hillman Student Travel Fund.

At the business meeting, the section members accepted a formal invitation from Brown University to host the 2004 meeting. A slate of new membership of the NEASPB Executive Committee and a new NEASPB representative to the national ASPB Executive Committee was approved by voice vote. Following the approval of a motion on vote of thanks to the Bucknell Organizing Committee, the meeting ended around 1:00 p.m. To those who attended, the NEASPB Executive Committee extends its thanks for your support and interest. We look forward to seeing you all next year at Brown University.

Subhash C. Minocha  
Secretary/Treasurer, NEASPB  
Professor of Plant Biology and Genetics  
University of New Hampshire

Following the final symposium by Sarah Assmann (second from right), John Lisack, ASPB executive director (third from right) met with Mark Spiro (center), this year’s chair of the NEASPB, and other attendees.
How Many Plants Does It Take to Make a Big Mac®?

That was the question asked of students stopping by ASPB’s booth at the Minorities in Science and Technology 11th Annual MIST Career Fair for Washington metropolitan area students. Held in April at The George Washington University, the fair was attended by more than 500 middle school and high school students. ASPB member Robin Buell of The Institute for Genomic Research, Rockville, Maryland, staffed the booth with ASPB’s Education Foundation director Robin Lempert. The focus was on exciting young students about plants, helping them see all the things plants are part of, and talking to them about the reasons for studying plants and possibly pursuing a career path in plant biology.

Students participated in an interactive exercise designed to catch their attention and relate plants to something already familiar to them. They had to determine how many plants it takes to make a Big Mac® and then identify which plants are included among the ingredients. The booth had pictures of common vegetables and herbs that are used in cooking, and the students attached the ones they chose to display in the booth. This exercise gave us a chance to talk to them about the variety of plants and how they are used. Students also had a chance to determine which things in the rooms of their houses are made from plants. We then asked them what career they thought they would pursue and showed them that studying plant science is relevant to a wide variety of career options even if they don’t plan to major in biology. The Big Mac® and “house plants” materials used in the booth are available as PDF files online for K–12 teachers to download and for ASPB members to download and use in outreach programs.

The MIST Career Fair is designed to interest minority students in careers in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology. Also exhibiting at the fair were The Smithsonian Institution; AAAS; USDA’s Agricultural Research Service; the National Institutes of Health; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Office of Children’s Health Protection; the Wilderness Society; area universities; and other science, math, and technology organizations.

Students at the ASPB booth worked together to determine how many, and which, plants are used in a Big Mac® sandwich.
In a recent letter to the ASPB News (vol. 30, no. 1), Steve Holzberg raised a number of issues related to agricultural biotechnology. Several of his arguments appear to be based on incomplete information and thus serve to promulgate misunderstandings of fundamental legal and regulatory concerns in this area. As a law professor specializing in agricultural biotechnology and an academic researcher who has carefully followed societal responses to this technology, we believe Mr. Holzberg’s letter deserves a response.

American consumers are vigilantly protected by the regulatory oversight given to agricultural biotechnology products. Each of the concerns that Mr. Holzberg raised has been carefully and thoroughly addressed, and each of his concerns has been found wanting by administrative agencies and court decisions. Moreover, European studies have found the concerns he expressed to be lacking in merit. For example, a report by the European Commission (summarizing 81 EU-financed studies over a period of 15 years and involving several hundred European scientists) found no evidence of additional harm to humans or the environment from approved transgenic crops (European Commission, EC-sponsored Research on Safety of Genetically Modified Organisms—A Review of Results [Oct. 2001, EUR 19884]). More recently, in December 2002, the French Academies of Sciences and Medicine issued reports concluding that transgenic crops had caused no health problems for humans or animals and had caused no damage to the environment (French Academy of Sciences, Genetically Modified Plants: Report about the Science and the Technology [No. 13, Dec. 2002]). These two French academies attributed the European objections to agricultural biotechnology to “the propagation of erroneous information.”

The FDA and USDA have consistently stated that voluntary labeling of agricultural biotechnology products is both what the law allows and what sensible policy adopts. As there are no health concerns with any approved, presently marketed agricultural biotech products, those consumers who want only nontransgenic ingredients can do so by looking for products voluntarily labeled for that market. More specifically, these consumers may purchase products labeled in accordance with the National Organic Program as organic products.

With regard to the Canadian case against canola grower Percy Schmeiser, the Canadian lower federal courts ruled that Mr. Schmeiser saved canola seed from his fields, which he had sprayed with Roundup herbicide. Mr. Schmeiser kept this Roundup-resistant canola seed in separate storage and purposefully planted his fields with the segregated seed. Thus, Mr. Schmeiser was not an innocent possessor of Roundup-resistant canola seed. In light of these findings, the Canadian courts said it was irrelevant as to how the seeds originally came to be in his fields—a factual dispute that remains unresolved and contested between Monsanto and Mr. Schmeiser. The courts ruled that Mr. Schmeiser’s actions violated the patent in the same way the courts would rule that anyone who multiplied a software program had violated the intellectual property rights of the software developer, irrespective of any dispute about how the person copying the software program had acquired it.

Intellectual property rights are established from the domestic laws of each nation. In Zambia, where no intellectual property rights exist for plants, no Zambian farmer need have legal concerns stemming from the unlicensed use of transgenic seed. Companies that develop such seed would have no legal claim in Zambian courts because there is no Zambian law upon which to file a legal claim. It should be noted that Zambia did not reject the grains offered as food aid—the same grains eaten every day for a nutritious, adequate diet by millions of people in Argentina, Canada, South Africa, and the United States, and by Zambians in previous food aid shipments—for reasons related to intellectual property rights.

Many of the other accusations Mr. Holzberg tossed into his letter have similar, reasonable rebuttals, which may be obtained from any number of informed sources and need not be recounted here. Fortunately, and by contrast, in accordance with a majority of its membership, ASPB has adopted sensible, moderate positions regarding agricultural biotechnology. While ASPB members are entitled to their individual opinions, the Society has wisely chosen to orient itself toward sound science and moderate policy.

Drew L. Kersen
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Jeffrey F. D. Dean
Associate Professor of Forest Biotechnology
Director, The Plant Center
University of Georgia
From the Web

Did you know that the ASPB web site is the first one listed when doing a Google search on "plant biology web site"? We have more than one million hits, with at least 200,000 individual page views and 40,000 unique visitors to the site per month. The success of our site is due in large part to our members, who have taken advantage of our online order forms, campaigns, and information. Ninety percent of the Plant Biology meeting registrations came in via the web this year. Thank you for using the site and for your patience during our growing periods. We hope to make more information and tools available to you via the web site.

Easily and quickly renew your membership and journal subscriptions online this year at http://www.aspb.org/renew/. Pay online by credit card or check using our completely secured VeriSign payment process. You’ll receive your receipt via e-mail within minutes and be done!

A lot is happening on the web front. We have received certification to develop our own custom pages to integrate with the IMIS membership database. A few pieces have already been built, such as a member ID lookup and directory that connects directly to the membership database rather than a database that is only updated once a week. The new pieces will be released along with other eSeries modules. The web site will become more personalized for each member who logs in.

You probably noticed some slowness on the site in May and June after we moved the web site to our new server location at ISG. The hosting facility has been upgraded to help increase the speed of our site. ISG has been stellar in their response to our needs with IMIS and with our site hosting. Send us an e-mail if you have any problems accessing our site.

With the last newsletter issue, we included a link to change how you would like to receive your newsletter. We know some e-mail systems cannot handle HTML e-mail and some people just don’t like receiving it, so we added the option to receive the e-mail in text-only format. You can also opt to receive the paper copy of the newsletter, and the e-mail will just be a reminder for you. Log in to your members-only page to change your newsletter options.

There are two excellent resources on the ASPB web site that have been quietly growing in the background. Our Resource Links library now has more than 560 links in it. The sites listed in the library range from member’s research to laboratory equipment providers. Add your favorite plant biology resource to the list at http://www.aspb.org/resourcelinks/submitlink.cfm. The other resource is the growing list of books on the Interesting Reading section of the Women in Plant Biology Committee page at http://www.aspb.org/committees_societies/women/reading.cfm. Check it out!

Feedback and suggestions for the site are always welcome. Send an e-mail to Wendy Sahli, webmaster@aspb.org.

Wendy Sahli
ASPB Webmaster
webmaster@aspb.org

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Woody Plant Biotechnology Symposium

Friday, October 17, 2003
Knoxville, Tennessee

Keynote Address:
“Woody Biotechnology and Society,” by Dr. C. S. Prakash, director of the Tuskegee University Center for Plant Biotechnology Research

Special Event:
October 16 dedication and tour of the University of Tennessee’s state-of-the-art plant biotechnology research building

Registration is free, but space is limited. All presentations will feature invited speakers. Scientists and students are invited to submit posters for consideration.

Symposium Organizers:
Dr. Neal Stewart, University of Tennessee professor and Racheff Chair of Excellence in Plant Molecular Genetics, 865-974-7324, e-mail nealstewart@utk.edu
Dr. Robert Trigiano, University of Tennessee professor of plant pathology, 865-974-7135, e-mail rtrigian@utk.edu
In the Garden

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.
—Emily Dickinson

My foothills garden is now two years old! Although it has been something of a struggle against the elements (excessive heat, drought, disgusting heavy clay subsoil), most of my new plants and trees are growing, and some even appear to be thriving. It’s early summer, and so far this year we have been blessed with frequent rain and cool temperatures. The garden is a profusion of color. At the nursery I am like a kid in a candy store; I would like to create elegant, tasteful beds of shrubs and perennials with mass plantings of just a few well-chosen colors and textures, but there are too many lovely plants! I can’t resist, and my carefully concocted plans go out the window. I make strict rules: No more purchases until everything in the garage and stacked up alongside the house is planted and, where necessary, tied in to the drip system (new plantings—even drought-resistant ones—will shrivel fast if not watered regularly); no purchases of anything that is not on the list before I leave the house (this one is still regularly broken); no multiple varieties of any one plant in one spot (I’m getting much better at this!).

A new concept in gardening is to minimize the lawn area and create numerous “rooms” around the yard that are set off from each other by strategically placed trees and shrubs, and that might be arranged to have different functions: a secluded shady area with a bench or chair for reading, a vegetable patch, a picnic spot, a room for the birds. I plan to put this idea to good use to create the illusion of privacy in our small yard that is bounded closely on all sides by neighboring yards (and neighboring dogs and kids) separated only by an open three-pole fence. At the rear, facing north, where there is only 15 feet from house to property line, we will build an arbor and trellis planted with heavy, fast-growing vines to enclose the flagstone patio. To the west, which provides something of a view to the foothills (and another 15 feet from house to neighboring property line), a vegetable and herb garden and a path running through the sunny perennials in prairie and rock gardens. To the east, where we have the most space and privacy, a path alongside the house running to another patio, this one secluded on the shaded side of house, the farthest distance from any neighboring houses and cloaked in the soothing greens of lawn and aspen grove.

A garden is a wonderful place, and one created with your own hands from bare red subsoil, more wonderful still. I take a break from my labors and sit in the shade (real tree shade!) and practice revery. I admire my mass planting of carpet roses, now full of lovely salmon pink blooms, and I wonder how many more years I will have to wait until the grackles can have their fill of sour cherries and still leave enough for just one pie. And as for bees; most of my “rooms” are really nothing more than bee-havens. If I could just sit still and contemplate my little prairie while bumblebees the size of Kansas buzz around my head, maybe then I could be called a real gardener.

Nan Eckardt
neckardt@aspb.org

Deadlines for ASPB News

We invite you to submit articles and letters to the ASPB News. Deadlines for submission of copy follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September/October 2003</td>
<td>August 5, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November/December 2003</td>
<td>October 5, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January/February 2004</td>
<td>December 5, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March/April 2004</td>
<td>February 5, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/June 2004</td>
<td>April 5, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/August 2004</td>
<td>June 5, 2004</td>
</tr>
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Using the HighWire Press Portal:
Fine-Tune Your Search with a Single Click

The HighWire Portal contains over a million full-text articles from hundreds of the world’s best journals, not to mention more than 12 million article abstracts from Medline in its searching and alerting facilities. But a search across all this content can bring back so many results that you might feel completely overwhelmed.

With a single click on the search result page, you can easily try variations of your search if you see too many—or too few—results.

Suppose you were looking for a single full-text article about recent research on flowering time. You type the words “flowering time” in the Quick Search box and click the radio button for “HighWire-hosted + Medline,” then click Go. The system now searches for these words in the full text of several hundred HighWire-hosted journals, plus all Medline’s abstracts. In a few seconds, HighWire tells you that there are 12,040 articles and shows you the first page of 10 citations.

Let’s refine this search one click at a time (see Figure 1):

Click on phrase to reduce your search result to only those articles in which the words “flowering time” occur together as a phrase. You are left with 913 results. Hmm.

Click on review articles to further reduce your result to only those articles that are reviews. More than 40.

Click on HighWire-hosted journals to further reduce the result to journals whose recent full-text is online. The search result will allow you to see easily which articles are accessible to you and your students online (no need for a course reader or putting the article on reserve!). Now “only” 25 articles.

At this point it is probably efficient to scan the first 10 results and see if any of these are just what you want. Why might you get lucky in the first 10 of 25 articles? Because the portal’s search engine offers “relevance-ranked” results, as well as the “most-recent-articles first” option (PubMed offers only the latter). So, if your search term is found in the title of a document, the document will be closer to the first page in your search result than if the term were found in the abstract but not the title; and if the term were found in the abstract, the document would be ranked higher than if the term were found only in the full-text body of the article.

You may now want to limit the results to the set of journals you are most familiar and comfortable with for your own searching. Click My Favorite Journals. (You will need to have already registered at the portal and set up this feature.) Depending on the set of journals you’ve selected, you might have only a dozen results. You can now force the system to drop relevance ranking and simply present the results so that the most recent articles are first. Click newest first. Although this doesn’t reduce the number of articles in the result, it might make something particularly recent jump to the top, instead of the articles in Crop Science and Genetics shown in our example page. You will know which articles you can assign, because you can see the indication that this article is FREE to you for all the free articles.

As a check to see whether you have missed anything, you note that the top right of the page shows Topics best matching my search, which indicates some subject-based collections of articles that are about the topic of interest. You click on the topic name “Flowering Pathways” and see that the second article, which is from a 2002 issue of The Plant Cell, is about how flowering is controlled by environmental conditions and developmental regulation, and it is freely available without a subscription. So you add it to your growing reading pile.

The 2002 and 2003 issues of the ASPB News contain a series of articles about the HighWire Portal. The articles are online at http://www.aspb.org/newsletter.
Membership Corner

ASPB members share a common goal of promoting the growth, development, and outreach of plant biology as a pure and applied science. This column features some of the dedicated and innovative members of ASPB who believe that membership in our Society is crucial to the future of plant biology.

If you are interested in contributing to this feature, please contact Kelley Noone, ASPB membership and marketing manager, at knoone@aspb.org.

Name: Carl Bernacchi
Title: Postdoctoral Research Plant Physiologist
Place of work or school: USDA, Agricultural Research Service / University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign
Research area: Plant Physiology/Environmental Physiology
Member since: 2001

1. Has being a member of ASPB helped you in your career? If so how?
   ASPB has helped my career, and I see it continuing to help for many years. The annual meetings have already provided research collaboration opportunities and a great venue to present my research. Additionally, I have found out about permanent positions from the ASPB News, from the web site, and from contacts I have met at the various meetings.

2. Why has being a member of ASPB been important?
   Membership is important for the reasons stated above and because it has given me the opportunity to present my research in various formats. I also obtain a large amount of information from the ASPB web site.

3. Was someone instrumental in getting you to join ASPB?
   My Ph.D. adviser, Stephen Long, continually stresses to his students the importance of membership in research societies. The emphasis he places on society membership is a testament of how effective he is as an adviser.

4. What would you tell nonmembers to encourage them to join?
   Most people I know who aren’t members are students or postdocs. I encourage them to join because it is at this stage where the benefits of membership are probably the greatest.

5. Have you gotten a job using ASPB job postings or through networking at the annual meeting?
   Not yet. I recently applied for two positions that I found out from reading the ASPB online “Job Bank” and from a contact I made at a recent meeting. I’m keeping my fingers crossed.

6. Have you hired anyone as a result of a job posting at the meeting or on our online Job Bank?
   Not a relevant question for me!

7. Do you still read print journals? Where do you usually read them: work, home, library, in the car, on the bus?
   No. I mostly search the table of contents of the journal I am interested in and print out articles I would like to read. I tend to read these mostly at the office or while I travel.

8. What do you think is the next “big thing” in plant biology?
   The next big thing in my eyes is to make sense of the huge developments in genome sequencing and functional genomics at an organ and a whole plant level. I see the role of the traditional plant physiologist growing stronger in the years to come. (I may be somewhat biased here.)

9. What person, living or dead, do you most admire?
   I most admire my wife.

10. What are you reading these days?
    Outside of research articles, most of what I read involves bright colors, Barney, or whatever else my infant daughter wants me to read to her.

11. What are your hobbies?
    I really enjoy doing things around the house—repairing appliances, working on the plumbing, doing electrical work, building things, etc. I also am interested in computer programming. I am mostly self-taught, but this hobby tends to facilitate a lot of what I do for my current position.

12. What is your most treasured possession?
    All the photos and video of my daughter. She is an infant, and it is amazing how much she changes from day to day. Any record of her at the various stages of development is priceless.

13. What do you still have left to learn?
    Just about everything. I guess that is why they call it the “endless pursuit for knowledge.”
The Bioethics Imperative XII

Ethics and Useful Letters of Reference

“Mokita”; The truth we all know and agree not to talk about. Papua New Guinea.

Scenario: PI Jones in an offhand manner asks a technician, Susie Queue, about the lab citizenship of his graduate student, Millie Molar. In saying “thank you,” he mentions that he has just written a letter of reference for Millie Molar and wanted to include this information. Susie then tells Danny Boie that their boss wrote a negative letter of reference for Millie Molar so she’ll never get a good postdoc. Each begins to wonder what will happen to them when their turn comes. Another graduate student asks about other letters of reference that this PI has written and the rumors escalate. The entire lab becomes unhappy, mistrust begins to build, and the PI wonders what is going on that he does not understand. A while later, at lab meeting, Millie announces that she was offered a postdoc in each and every lab to which she applied. The rest of the lab is stunned as the PI and Millie exchange high-fives.

There are at least two bioethical issues inherent in this scenario: potentially inappropriate information exchange between the PI and technician and rumor-mongering on the part of the students.

Should the PI have asked the technician about the lab conduct of the student? One might argue this either way, but I believe that most would say that the PI has a right to know what is happening in his lab when he is busy in his office. It was a request for information, pure and simple, as long as no judgment was meted out in the process. What was inappropriate and potentially inflammatory was the statement by the PI of what he was going to do with that information because it crossed a professional boundary. Although the request was innocent, knowing how the information would be used effectively cornered the technician into “ratting” on the student. A smile, a thank you, and an “I’ll talk to Millie” would have done the trick.

Clearly the lab personnel did not understand what a good letter entails, and both the PI and his personnel have an ethical and professional responsibility to initiate this conversation when the information is needed. The lab personnel collectively made several assumptions: (1) that the PI was looking for negative information to put in the letter; (2) that the PI would act maliciously toward them because of what they assumed he was saying about Millie; (3) that only praise is included in letters of reference; and (4) that they could or should not discuss their concerns about the situation with the PI directly. The situation spun out of control because it went on for a long time and spread to the entire group, another unprofessional dynamic. It takes ethical individuals acting in a professional manner to put a stop to unprofessional group situations. Learning what a good letter contains and how the PI viewed their performance (keeping it a one-on-one exchange without rumors or hearsay about others) would have created a wonderful opportunity for learning and prevented the downward spiral.

At the risk of repeating parts of Bioethics X, a useful letter of reference
- explains how the letter writer knows the candidate and for how long
- provides the context of the significance of the science for a general audience
- focuses on the strengths of the candidate
- shares assessment of the candidate’s weaknesses or where the candidate is not as strong
- discusses the candidate’s work habits and work ethic
- explores the candidate’s level and source of motivation
- elaborates on the candidate’s professional interests
- shares a bit about what the candidate is like as a person
- compares people directly if recommending more than one candidate for the same job
- takes care to match forms and checkbox evaluations to prose in the letter.

A sugary-sweet letter is not taken seriously because no one is perfect. An entirely negative letter is not taken seriously because it is clearly biased. Balance, including a frank assessment of what environment a student needs to succeed and what they could do better, always makes for a useful letter.

Next: To be announced

Dina Mandoli
University of Washington, Seattle
mandoli@u.washington.edu
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

American Philosophical Society Research Grants

All information, and forms, for all of the society’s programs can be downloaded from our web site at http://www.amphilsoc.org. Click on “Grants” on the homepage.

Franklin Research Grants

Eligibility
Applicants are normally expected to have a doctorate or to have published work of doctoral character and quality. Pre-doctoral students are not eligible, but the society is especially interested in supporting the work of young scholars who have recently received the doctorate. Applicants may be residents of the United States or American citizens resident abroad. Foreign nationals whose research can be carried out only in the United States are eligible. Grants are made to individuals. Institutions are not eligible to apply.

Scope
Grants are made for research only. The program is designed to help meet the cost of travel to libraries and archives for research purposes, the purchase of microfilm, and the costs associated with fieldwork or laboratory research expenses. The program does not accept proposals in journalistic writing; for the preparation of textbooks, for academic study or classroom presentation; for travel to conferences or workshops; for the work of creative and performing artists; for assistance with publication or translation.

Maximum Award: $6,000

Deadlines: October 1, December 1

Decisions are reached in late January and in March.

Tax Information
Grants and fellowships are taxable income, but the society is not required to report payments. It is understood that grant and fellowship recipients will discuss their reporting obligations with their tax advisers. Grants and fellowships made to nonresident aliens require additional processing time.

Contact Information
Questions concerning the eligibility of a project or the use of funds for are accepted at 215-440-3429, via e-mail to eroach@amphilsoc.org, or in writing to Franklin Research Grants American Philosophical Society, 104 South 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

Include the following information:
• indication of your eligibility
• nature of the research (e.g., archival, laboratory, fieldwork)
• proposed use of the grant funds (travel, purchase of microfilm, etc.)
• Foreign nationals must state what objects of research they need access to, available only in the United States.

Information Updated: May 2003

ASPB now accepts checks over the web.

It is simple and secure.
We will accept your university, company, or personal check.

Just go online, fill out the web form, and put the check information in the system.
We will receive your order of renewal as soon as you hit the submit button.
This process is for checks drawn on U.S. banks in U.S. funds only.
If you have questions about this new service, please e-mail Kelley Noone at knoone@aspb.org.

ASPB’s International Affairs Committee invites you to visit its web page at http://www.aspb.org/committees_societies/international.cfm for information and to see if you qualify for any need-based support:

• Need-Based Policy for Journal Subscriptions and the textbook Biochemistry & Molecular Biology of Plants
• Policy for Support of Meetings, Workshops, & Courses in Developing Countries
The American Society of Plant Biologists is pleased to announce *The Arabidopsis Book (TAB)*, a dynamic, fully electronic compilation of chapters edited by Chris Somerville and Elliot Meyerowitz and available free of charge on the Internet.

*TAB* offers a new model for scientific publishing. Each of the 100+ chapters planned for the book will review in detail an important aspect of the plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*, and the content will continually evolve as new information becomes available, making *TAB* the most comprehensive and current work on Arabidopsis.

ASPB is providing funds for the mounting and maintenance of *TAB* on the Internet as a public service. All chapters and updates are hosted in partnership with BioOne (http://www.bioone.org) in both HTML and PDF formats.
The report from the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (USDA–CSREES) stakeholders’ workshop held November 14, 2002, in the area of plants and pest biology has been printed and made available for distribution. The report compiles recommendations from approximately 45 stakeholder representatives who participated (four are pictured below). Participants included many scientific societies such as ASPB, which was represented by Thomas Sharkey; growers; environmental interests; and officials from USDA, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy.

The goal of the workshop was for CSREES to obtain the perspectives and guidance of the agricultural community for future CSREES program development. Recommendations for future interagency-sponsored plant genome research were also presented to representatives of the White House–appointed Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Plant Genomes. IWG representatives Ed Kaleikau, Machi Dilworth, and Sharlene Weatherwax participated in the workshop in advance of contributing to writing the five-year plan (2003–2008) for the National Plant Genome Initiative. The workshop also afforded the opportunity for increased interaction between plant and pest biology science society representatives with growers and agency officials.

Recommendations and action items noted in the USDA–CSREES Plants and Pest Biology Stakeholders’ Report included the following:

- **Plant and pest sciences** are vibrant with new discoveries and impending uses. The fields have never been more exciting.
- In genomics, consider including a program in which sequencing and mining gene-rich regions are offered. Genomics of so-called second- or third-tier crops, such as vegetables, horticultural crops, and forestry, should be considered for their contributions to human and animal health and the environment. In addition, several major crops were mentioned as benefiting from sequencing gene-rich regions, and wheat was singled out as an example of a critical crop and as a model polyploid plant. This genomics approach will supply basic knowledge required to increase productivity, sustainability, and utility.
- More geographic (site) specific research emphasis is needed, including global change, agricultural contributions to “dead zones,” and hypoxia, which are examples of ecosystem malfunction. More attention is needed to examine consequences of agricultural practices, including effects of transgenic organisms on biodiversity and agrosecurity.
- Applied research in controlled-environment agriculture, one of the fastest growing agricultural areas for vegetables and ornamentals, needs attention. Physical aspects, as well as the biology and use of beneficial microbes and insects, need support.
- In education and extension, needs are acute for human capital in several disciplines: plant breeding, systematics, and applied plant physiology. CSREES is challenged to recognize these needs and provide programs enabling support.
- Participants expressed the view that the workshop was a useful mechanism for groups to interact, as well as present their views. CSREES was encouraged to periodically hold similar workshops in the future.

USDA–CSREES has been distributing the report to stakeholders and key USDA officials, and there is also expected to be distribution to key congressional offices by the department.

The acknowledgment in the report noted that “USDA–CSREES wishes to thank the American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB) and the ASPB Committee on Public Affairs for coordinating the workshop. Agency coordination was provided by Anne Vidaver, Liang-Shiou Lin, Gail McLean, Ann Lichens-Park, Mark Poth, Mary Purcell-Miramontes, and Ed Kaleikau.”

The report can be read on the ASPB web page at www.aspb.org/publicaffairs/.

Thomas Sharkey, ASPB Committee on Public Affairs Chair

Andrew Jordan, National Cotton Council of America

Mark Rokala, National Grain Sorghum Producers

Paul Hepperly, The Rodale Institute
Contributions of NRI, ARS Cited by ASPB in Comments to Senate Subcommittee

ASPB submitted comments on April 16 to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture urging support for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRI) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The comments addressed the fiscal year 2004 budget request of USDA. Following is a major portion of the comments:

Support by the Subcommittee for the NRI and the ARS contributes to important advances in fundamental and applied research in agriculture.

ASPB greatly appreciates the tremendous successful effort by the subcommittee to increase support for the NRI by some 38 percent to $166 million for fiscal year 2003! We urge the subcommittee to continue to place an emphasis on core areas of plant research sponsored by the NRI, including plant biochemistry, genetic mechanisms, growth and development, plant response to the environment, genomic research, and invasive plants. Advances in these areas of research will make a major contribution to increased crop production by America’s farmers.

The National Research Council Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee report on the NRI in 2000 strongly endorsed support for this competitive grants program. The NRC committee “found the NRI to have financed high-quality scientific work within congressional guidelines....The committee reiterates the extraordinary importance of public merit-based peer-reviewed research in food, fiber, and natural resources. In the committee’s opinion, past public research and current private activities cannot meet the needs that are being created by population growth, climate change, and natural resource deterioration or the challenges related to food safety and nutrition and to the growing convergence of foods and medical research.”

The NRC committee recommended that a major emphasis of the NRI continue to be the support of high-risk research with potential long-term payoffs. Much of this research would be classified as fundamental in the traditional use of this term.

A major conclusion of the NRC committee was that “Without a dramatically enhanced commitment to merit-based peer-reviewed, food, fiber and natural resources research, the nation places itself at risk.”

Continued support for a balanced research portfolio in the department, including intramural and extramural research, is needed to address the many and sometimes devastating problems farmers face in growing crops. ARS continues to address very effectively many important research questions for American agriculture. American farmers and consumers are well-served by the large number of successful research efforts of ARS scientists.

In addition to the direct benefits to farmers and consumers that result from the leading research discoveries sponsored by the NRI and ARS, increased support for these programs will help maintain the strength and vigor of the nation’s agricultural research community.

Helping American farmers meet the food production needs of the nation’s 280 million people and millions more overseas places huge demands on the research community. With more former farmlands sprouting townhouses and other non-agricultural development, there are increased demands on the research community to help boost crop yields per acre. At the same time, the research community is called upon to find more environmentally benign approaches to increase yields. We believe that these goals of producing higher crop yields on the same or less acreage in a manner that is friendlier to the environment could be met with increased emphasis on support for ARS- and NRI-sponsored plant research.

For example, research sponsored by the NRI and ARS is leading to plants engineered to tolerate higher levels of salinity. This will help farmers salvage more of their crops in dry seasons. Increased tolerance of future engineered plants to environmental stresses of cold and freezing will be a boon to growers. The federal government will experience savings in emergency spending for crop disasters—some disasters that will be avoided through use of new, enhanced plants.

Much progress has been made in fighting plant diseases with crops engineered to resist pests. At the same time, the usage of harsh chemical pesticides has been reduced through the use of genetically engineered crops. Research sponsored by the NRI and ARS contributed knowledge leading to the development of these superior crops. Increased support for the NRI and ARS will lead to more varieties of enhanced crops resistant to devastating diseases.

We urge the subcommittee to increase support for the NRI and ARS in fiscal year 2004. As requested by the president, ASPB urges appropriating $200 million to the NRI in fiscal year 2004. We urge a significant increase for ARS over the fiscal year 2003 appropriation.
New NRI Programs for Plant and Microbial Genome and Plant Biosecurity Research

The Department of Agriculture announced May 19, 2003, a request for applications (RFA) for $30 million in supplemental funding under the National Research Initiative (NRI) Competitive Grants Program.

The supplemental RFA targets five new programs: functional genomics (including plant, microbial, animal, and insect genomics), human nutrition and obesity, air quality, animal and plant biosecurity, and training for agricultural homeland security. The new programs result from a $46 million increase in funding for the NRI in fiscal year 2003 supported by ASPB.

The RFA can be found at http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/funding/rfanri_integrated_program_03.htm.

A link to this site is on the ASPB homepage, public affairs section, at http://www.aspb.org/publicaffairs/research/newnri.cfm. This announcement was also sent electronically to ASPB Campus Contacts on May 19. If you are an ASPB member who did not receive the electronic notice from ASPB and you are not at a campus that receives such announcements of federal programs and alerts, please contact ASPB’s director of public affairs, Brian Hyps, at bhyps@aspb.org to receive future announcements.

Five-Year Plan for the National Plant Genome Initiative

The National Science Technology Council’s Five-Year Plan for the National Plant Genome Initiative: 2003–2008 includes the following new objectives:

- Continued Elucidation of Genome Structure and Organization
- Functional Genomics
- Translational Plant Genomics
- Bioinformatics
- Education, Training, and Outreach
- Consideration of Broader Impacts.

In writing the report, the National Science and Technology Council’s Committee on Science Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Plant Genomes considered input from the science community, including the report of the National Research Council–appointed Committee on Objectives for the National Plant Genome Initiative: 2003–2008, chaired by ASPB member Jeff Dangl. The IWG also considered recommendations with regard to plant genome research presented by stakeholders at the plant and pest biology stakeholders’ workshop that ASPB coordinated for USDA–CSREES on November 14, 2002, in Crystal City, Virginia.

As supported by ASPB, the IWG report strongly recommends increased investment in the National Plant Genome Initiative over the next five years. Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO) has been joined by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and their colleagues in Congress in providing $375 million for the Plant Genome Research Program cumulatively over the past six years, including fiscal year 2003.

The IWG is chaired by Mary Clutter, National Science Foundation assistant director for biological sciences, and by Joseph Jen, Department of Agriculture undersecretary for research, education, and economics.

The five-year plan for the National Plant Genome Initiative can be found at http://www.ostp.gov/NSTC/html/npgi2003/index.htm.
**Wing and Buell Find Twice as Many Genes in Rice Chromosome 10**

A June 6 report in the journal *Science* on rice genome research shows twice as many genes in chromosome no. 10 as was believed when the completed draft sequence of the rice genome was reported in December 2002.

The research project—led by ASPB members Rod A. Wing of the University of Arizona and C. Robin Buell of The Institute for Genomic Research, as well as by W. Richard McCombie of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory—was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health, and the Department of Energy. A portion of chromosome 10 was also sequenced by the Plant Genome Initiative at Rutgers University.

The work demonstrates the value of pursuing the full sequence in detail, said Judith Plesset, a program director in NSF’s Directorate for Biological Sciences, which supported the project. “One of the lessons here is, ‘Don’t think you know everything simply because you’ve done the draft,”’ she said.


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**USA Today Reports Medford’s Research Could Lead to Houseplant Sentinels Warning of Terror Attacks**

Research on Arabidopsis conducted by ASPB member June Medford and sponsored by the Department of Defense as part of the war on terrorism is the subject of a front-page story in the May 28 (print) edition of *USA Today*. The story begins with the following:

“When June Medford came up with the idea to use tiny weeds as weapons in the war against terrorism, she figured most people would call it a joke. But the federal government didn’t laugh.

Now, armed with a half-million-dollar grant from the Pentagon, the Colorado State University plant biologist is trying to genetically engineer Arabidopsis plants to change color rapidly if they sense a biological or chemical agent.”

The article said that if Medford’s plan works, the technology could be used to turn forest evergreens, backyard shrubs, or even pond algae into sentinels for scientists. The article added that one day Americans might be able to use a cheap houseplant as an early-warning system. “It could be the proverbial canary in a coal mine for the post–Sept. 11 age,” the article said.

Although the *USA Today* article mentions only the work of June Medford, her colleague, ASPB member Dr. Anirreddy S. N. Reddy, is a co-principal investigator on this project. The full story is at [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2003-05-27-bugs-cover_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2003-05-27-bugs-cover_x.htm). This link can also be reached from the ASPB home page plant biotechnology section at [www.aspb.org/publicaffairs/](http://www.aspb.org/publicaffairs/).

June Medford and her colleague A.S.N. Reddy

*Photograph by Bill Cotton, provided by Colorado State University*
McHughen Op-Ed Addresses EU Scientists’ Findings on Modified Foods

ASPB member Alan McHughen’s commentary on the U.S. action with the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the European Union (EU) on its genetically modified foods ban was distributed by the Knight Ridder Tribune News Service. The commentary was published by the St. Louis Post Dispatch May 16, the Providence Sunday Journal May 18, and the Wichita Eagle May 22. Knight Ridder has also distributed other news commentaries on modified foods by McHughen and other ASPB members that have resulted in newspaper publication. Following is McHughen’s commentary.

European Union’s Own Scientists Found New Crops Safe

RIVERSIDE, Calif.—Why is the United States taking the European Union to the World Trade Organization court because of its longstanding moratorium against genetically modified crops?

Are we simply bullying European consumers by forcing unwanted food down their throats as some suggest? Hardly. The United States, Canada, Argentina, Egypt and nearly a dozen other countries are merely reminding the EU to live up to the contractual provisions it agreed to years ago.

Modern trade agreements such as those administered by the WTO attempt to ensure more equitable, better-balanced trade. The contract governing this international trade contains a provision requiring a country to provide scientific evidence to back up an assertion that a product is unsafe.

The United States and allied nations are now taking the EU to the WTO court because, several years ago, the EU refused to accept food commodities developed using modern biotechnology. The stated justification was that the biotech foods “might be” unsafe. The United States, pointing to the contract signed by the EU, is saying, “Fine, if you think the foods are unsafe, show us the evidence.”

The EU delayed its reply and commissioned a series of studies to generate the grounds for refusing the foods. The resulting analysis was culled from 81 different scientific studies conducted by more than 400 mainly public scientific researchers in the EU at a cost of $65 million.

The result? Nothing. Nada. Zip. Zero. The EU’s own public scientists were unable to provide any scientific or medical evidence to justify the ban on biotech foods.

As a result, EU scientists and professional groups, including France’s National Academy of Medicine and Britain’s Royal Society, now are stating publicly that the hazards of biotech foods are no different from those of ordinary foods.

This is the same conclusion reached by a host of other international scientific and medical groups, including the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the American Medical Association. The evidence has convinced some, but unfortunately not all, of the European bureaucrats advising the politicians.

While David Byrne, the European Union’s own health and consumer protection commissioner, recently conceded that genetically modified food was as safe as conventional food, EU trade representative Pascal Lamy has dug in his heels and vowed to fight for the ban. If Lamy is so certain, the EU has a duty to bolster his arguments by providing evidence of hazard in order to sustain the ban. Americans, after all, have been consuming genetically modified food products—without harm—for more than a decade.

The United States and its allies are not forcing unwanted food down the unwilling throats of European consumers. Allowing a commodity into a market does not compel consumers to buy, but rather provides them with the opportunity to choose.

Organic foods, which prohibit biotech ingredients, are widely available in Europe to provide for those consumers wishing to avoid biotech foods.

Opening the market to American biotech commodities does not threaten the organic market, but secures it as the non-biotech alternative. EU consumers currently are denied the precious freedom to choose that Americans, Canadians and millions of others routinely enjoy.

American farmers are losing $300 million a year in potential exports due to the unjustified ban. A Europe open to trade in biotech foods is a win–win situation on both sides of the Atlantic.

American farmers can resume providing Europe with high-quality, nutritious food. European consumers will enjoy greater choice and selection in the grocery. And the European Union members will regain international respect for honoring their treaty commitments.

Alan McHughen is a biotech specialist at the University of California, Riverside (www.ucr.edu) and the author of Pandora’s Picnic Basket: The Potential and Hazards of Genetically Modified Foods.
Prakash Keynotes Symposium Opening UT Plant Biotechnology Research Facility

An October dedication of the University of Tennessee’s (UT) state-of-the-art plant biotechnology research building will feature a symposium related to tree biotechnology and genomics. Session topics will range from pine genomics to plant pathology and gene regulation and expression in woody plants.

Planned for Friday, October 17, 2003, the keynote speaker for the symposium will be Tuskegee University’s C. S. Prakash, director of Tuskegee’s Center for Plant Biotechnology Research and a member of ASPB. In addition to being known for his research on food crops, Prakash conducts public outreach efforts internationally regarding the impact of biotechnology on society and the world’s food supply.

The new UT facility is being built in the heart of the Institute of Agriculture campus in Knoxville. It will house research programs that focus on agricultural and environmental resources, plant breeding and genetics, plant and plant stress physiology, pest management, molecular biology, and renewable energy. Labs equipped with the latest instruments will serve more than 40 faculty members and their graduate and postdoctoral students, said Dr. Jack Britt, UT vice president of agriculture and acting dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station.

Scientists from various disciplines will share specialized equipment, central service laboratories, and plant growth chambers to discover solutions to benefit agriculture, our natural resources, and society, Britt said. Undergraduate and graduate students will learn new techniques in some of the nation’s most advanced laboratories and attend classes in classrooms equipped with the latest instructional technology.

For more information about the symposium or submitting a poster, contact Dr. Neal Stewart, UT professor and Racheff Chair of Excellence in Plant Molecular Genetics, 865-974-7324, e-mail nealstewart@utk.edu, or Dr. Robert Trigiano, UT professor of plant pathology, 865-974-7135, e-mail rtrigian@utk.edu. You may also visit the symposium web site at http://www.biotechsymposium.utk.edu.

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*Biochemistry & Molecular Biology of Plants* is distributed by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

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**What NABT Membership Can Offer ASPB Members**

Did you know that 15 percent to 20 percent of members of the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) are educators from four-year colleges, and 10 percent to 15 percent are educators from two-year colleges? Many of us think of NABT as an association for high school teachers, but there are numerous reasons for college educators to become involved in this organization.

The National Association of Biology Teachers is devoted to improving the quality of K–16 biology and life science education. It does this by facilitating communication among educators, providing professional opportunities and teaching resources for educators, and informing biology educators on education policy and advocating on their behalf.

Dr. Jane Ellis, associate professor of biology at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina, and an ASPB member since 1997, is currently chair of the four-year college section of NABT and a member of the board. She is energetically pursuing opportunities for links between ASPB and NABT. A few examples of NABT activities of particular interest to ASPB members follow.

**Major Projects**

NABT has recently completed major projects in collaboration with professional societies. The first is the Microbial Literacy Collaborative with the American Society for Microbiology. The collaborative mounted several major initiatives, including a four-part television series (Intimate Strangers: Unseen Life on Earth); a 12-part telecourse and textbook; and MicrobeWorld Activities Guide, 17 hands-on activities that correlate with and build on the themes and ideas presented in the television series. NABT was primarily responsible for the latter initiative. Because of its expertise, stature, and size, it was able to field the activities nationally to ensure that the activities were aligned with the National Science Education Standards and the New Standards™ Student Performance Standards.

Another collaborative project with the Society for Neuroscience resulted in the publication of Neuroscience Laboratory and Classroom Activities, an incredibly popular publication that is now available completely online.

**Science Partner Program**

This resource was developed to enhance interaction between the Four-Year College Section and the High School Teacher Membership of NABT. NABT is seeking faculty in the four-year college section to serve as resources in many capacities for high school teachers. The involvement can take many forms, including an e-mail message or letter; used materials, equipment, and specimens; lectures; laboratories; and student internships.

**Annual NABT National Convention**

The NABT National Convention offers several outlets for ASPB members to present their research or its broader applications. Scientists can present their findings from their scientific research and education at a poster session at the convention. They may also present a 30- to 60-minute hands-on demonstration of biology teaching tools and exercises or a “Special Workshop” (up to seven hours) to provide a more in-depth experience for teachers. These workshops may be remarkably advanced. Special Workshop titles for NABT 2003 include

* “Microscale Protein Biotechnology and Immunology for College and AP Biology”
* “PCR Detection of Genetic Modification in Foods”
* “Digital Image Capture for Biology Instruction”
* “Plant Tissue Culture in the Classroom.”

In addition to workshops, NABT hosts hour-long keynote speakers and occasionally offers half-day symposia on a topic of special interest.

**American Biology Teacher**

The American Biology Teacher is a peer-reviewed journal offering how-to suggestions for the classroom and laboratory, field activities, interdisciplinary programs, and articles on recent advances in biology and life science. It also covers the social and ethical implications of biology and ways to incorporate such concerns into instructional programs. Information on the journal and instructions on submitting papers for publication can be found at the NABT web site (www.nabt.org).

**Awards**

NABT offers several awards open to four-year college professors, including the Four-Year College Biology Research/Teaching Award (for recent contributions to research on teaching biology at the college level), the NABT Biotechnology Teaching Award (for classroom approaches that incorporate biotechnology), and the Four-Year College Biology Teaching Award (for creativity and innovation in teaching).

**The Four-Year College Section**

NABT membership is coordinated along sections, much like ASPB membership. The NABT Four-Year College Section is very active. One project the section is investigating is the development of an evaluation and certification program for college and university departments offering undergraduate degrees in biology. Such a program, developed with input from biology educators nationwide, would provide individual departments with an external “authority” against which they could assess their own programs. This initiative’s first goal is the development of a series of guidelines, which is well on its way toward completion.

**Summary**

It seems that NABT offers a ready-made and relatively simple venue for ASPB members to disseminate their knowledge and research implications to the broader community, as well as to participate in the development of pedagogical resources. For those of us teaching at four-year institutions, the four-year college section also provides an opportunity to connect with others at similar institutions and discuss educational matters. A basic membership costs $65 and includes subscriptions to American Biology Teacher and NABT’s quarterly newsletter News & Views.

Much of the above information was taken from the NABT web site (www.nabt.org). ASPB members wishing more information about NABT can refer to the web site or contact Dr. Jane Ellis (Biology Department, Presbyterian College, Clinton, SC 29325; e-mail jellis@presby.edu).
Aiming High in the Mountains: Plant Genetics 2003

Utah’s Wasatch Mountains are the magnificent backdrop for the first ASPB specialty conference, Plant Genetics 2003: Mechanisms of Genetic Variation. Set for October 22–26 at the Snowbird Resort and Conference Center, Snowbird, Utah, the conference offers an opportunity to catch up with the latest advances in an exciting area of plant biology at one of the country’s loveliest mountain retreats.

“The meeting will focus on the nature and mechanisms of genetic variation and their effects on evolution of plant form and function, as well as on plant speciation and crop domestication,” said vice chair Rich Jorgensen, University of Arizona. “This is a very timely meeting on a subject where there have been so many breakthroughs in the past few years” according to chair Venkatesan Sundaresan. “We have seen a lot of different approaches from plant breeding to genomics all coming together, and this is reflected in the exceptional list of speakers who will be attending.”

Mornings and evenings will be spent attending seven scientific symposia focused on different aspects of plant genetics and featuring a stellar cast of more than 20 internationally renowned scientists. Afternoons will be free for continued discussion—perhaps while exploring the diversity of plant life along miles of magnificent mountain trails. Pre-dinner poster sessions and mealtime socializing complete the schedule. All meals will be on site, and the speakers will be in attendance throughout the entire conference. “We felt it was very important to give attendees maximum access to top experts in the field of plant genetics,” said Sundaresan. “This format provides ample opportunity to explore subjects of interest in depth through both structured sessions and casual discussion.”

Minutes away from Salt Lake City, Snowbird is located within the rugged beauty of Little Cottonwood Canyon in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. A quiet, mountainside pedestrian village, it provides the perfect setting for learning and the dynamic exchange of information and perspective. “We wanted a location that was secluded and peaceful, so that participants and speakers could spend as much time as possible focused on the subject at hand,” said Jorgensen. “Snowbird is perfect. It’s easy to get to, yet self-contained enough that people will have everything they need in one place,” agreed Sundaresan.

A general program of the conference follows. Complete conference information and online registration is available at http://www.aspb.org/meetings/pg-2003 or by contacting Susan Rosenberry at chambers@aspb.org. Participation by graduate students and young postdoctoral fellows is encouraged, and discounted rates for registration and accommodation are available. Early registration is advisable, because it is a limited-attendance event.

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**ASPB PLANT GENETICS 2003:**
**Mechanisms of Genetic Variation**
**October 22–26, Snowbird, Utah**

**SCHEDULED SYMPOSIA AND SPEAKERS**

**Wednesday, October 22**

**Keynote Lecture**
*Speaker*
Enrico Coen (John Innes Centre)

**Genomes I: Natural Variation and Natural Processes of Evolution**
*Speakers*
Maarten Koornneef (Wageningen University)
Barbara Schaal (Washington University)
Rod Wing (University of Arizona)

**Thursday, October 23**

**Genomes II: Speciation and Crop Domestication**
*Speakers*
Loren Rieseberg (Indiana University)
John Doebley (University of Wisconsin)
Jonathan Wendel (Iowa State University)

**Control by Movement of RNA and Proteins**
*Speakers*
Herve Vaucheret (INRA)
David Jackson (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory)
Vicki Vance (University of South Carolina)

**Friday, October 24**

**Chromatin and Imprinting**
*Speakers*
Vicki Chandler (University of Arizona)
Eric Richards (Washington University)
Bonnie Bartel (Rice University)

**Saturday, October 25**

**Plant Form and Function I: Developmental Genes**
*Speakers*
John Bowman (University of California)
Sarah Hake (USDA/ARS)
Ueli Grossniklaus (University of Zürich)

**Plant Form and Function II: Evolutionary Dynamics of Resistance Genes**
*Speakers*
Jeff Dangl (University of North Carolina)
Joy Bergelson (University of Chicago)
Molly Jahn (Cornell University)
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- Our office telephone number is 301-251-0560

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