

# Penn State Plant Institute BioSphere Newsletter

February 2025

## Director's Corner

**Plant Institute Membership Drive Update** - The Plant Institute Membership Drive has gained 102 new members from various campuses across Pennsylvania in its first month. We extend a warm welcome to all new members. If you have not yet joined, we encourage you to join us to strengthen our collective voice to support of the PlantWorks project.

**Leadership and Community Engagement** I express my gratitude to the executive committee and newly established leadership team of volunteers (highlighted on the right) for their efforts in strengthening the Plant Science community at Penn State. We invite those passionate about becoming a part of our team to contact me at [mjq9@psu.edu](mailto:mjq9@psu.edu) or directly to the leaders themselves.

**The PlantWorks Project** is a roadmap towards the future of Plant Science at Penn State and is currently a high-priority for the Universities future planning process. This initiative aims to enhance Penn State's already strong position as a global leader in fulfilling the Land Grant Mission through infrastructure and human capital investment. For more information, visit PlantWorks Project.

<https://www.huck.psu.edu/institutes-and-centers/plant-institute/plantworks>

**Proposal for New Plant Growth Chambers:** A proposal for internal funding to install and repair plant growth chambers in various locations is being developed. To assist us in this endeavor, please fill out this brief survey to be included in the request.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/plantinstitutefacilityneeds>

**Upcoming Event: Spring 2025 Plant Institute Retreat** - Mark your calendars on May 15<sup>th</sup> for the Spring 2025 Plant Institute Retreat at Shavers Creek Environmental Center. The retreat will focus on sharing diverse research and activities related to plants at Penn State and fostering the development of networks and interdisciplinary teams and should generally be fun.

Mark Guiltinan  
Director, The Plant Institute

## ***The Plant Institute Leadership Team***

**Partnerships:** Coordination of membership and fostering collaborations with various Penn State institutes, centers, all campuses, and the Penn State office of corporate partnerships

**Siela Maximova**, Director for Partnerships

[snm104@psu.edu](mailto:snm104@psu.edu)

**Cameron Cedeno**, Team leader for Membership (Branching out initiative)

[cic315@psu.edu](mailto:cic315@psu.edu)

**Research:** Promotion of interdisciplinary and highly collaborative research among our members and affiliates.

**Hong Ma**, Faculty Lead

[hxm16@psu.edu](mailto:hxm16@psu.edu)

**Plant Institute Scholars:** Support of professional development activities and collaborates with senior institute membership to advance the institute's mission through their fresh perspectives and enthusiasm.

**Mark Guiltinan**, Faculty Lead

[mjq9@psu.edu](mailto:mjq9@psu.edu)

**Evelyn Kulesza**, President and Event Planner

[evk5405@psu.edu](mailto:evk5405@psu.edu)

**Jessica Walnut**, Treasurer

[jcwalnut17@psu.edu](mailto:jcwalnut17@psu.edu)

**Science Communication:** Publishing newsletter, social media, website, publications and outreach support

**Elsa Sanchez**, Faculty Lead

[ess11@psu.edu](mailto:ess11@psu.edu)

**Jigeesha Mukhopadhyay**, IT Lead

[jjm8394@psu.edu](mailto:jjm8394@psu.edu)

**Elsa Chen**, Web and Social Media Representative

[pzc5413@psu.edu](mailto:pzc5413@psu.edu)

**Public Education:** Coordination with arboretum and other educators on educational programming and public outreach

**Robert Witkowski**, Graduate student Lead

[rpw5414@psu.edu](mailto:rpw5414@psu.edu)

Ag Education Leads:

**Melanie Miller Foster** [mjm727@psu.edu](mailto:mjm727@psu.edu)

**Daniel Foster** [foster@psu.edu](mailto:foster@psu.edu)



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## UPCOMING DEPARTMENT SEMINARS

### **Plant Pathology & Environmental Microbiology**

Speaker & Affiliation: Hailing Jin, Professor, UC-Riverside

Talk Title: *Cross-Kingdom RNA Communication Between Plants and fungal pathogens*

When & Where: Monday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3:35pm – 4:35pm Buckhout 112, Zoom link below.

Speaker & Affiliation: Michael J. Axtell, Professor, Penn State

Talk Title: *MicroRNAs as virulence factors? Evidence from the parasitic plant Cuscuta campestris*

When & Where: Monday February 10<sup>th</sup>, 3:35pm – 4:35pm Buckhout 112, Zoom:

(<https://psu.zoom.us/j/92294802897?pwd=zJWb4Vx5j2LlO8TEW4hoShOPB7Neag.1>), Password: 702952

### **Plant Science**

Speaker & Affiliation: Ele Rose, AEPS PhD Candidate, Penn State

Talk Title: *How can we use algorithms to optimize maize roots under current and future climates in the Midwest?*

When & Where: Friday February 7<sup>th</sup>, 12:20pm-1:10pm Tyson Building 108

Zoom link below.

Speaker & Affiliation: Sheryl Hosler, Postdoctoral Scholar, Penn State

Talk Title: *Biodiversity and ecosystem functions in managed landscapes*

When & Where: Friday February 14<sup>th</sup>, 12:20pm-1:10pm Tyson Building 108

Zoom link: <https://psu.zoom.us/j/92505484059>

### **Plant Biology**

Speaker & Affiliation: Jesse Lasky, Professor, Penn State

Talk Title: *Adaptation in Arabidopsis through space and time*

When & Where: Monday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12:15pm-1:15pm Wartik Lab 108

Speaker & Affiliation: Donghui Wei, Graduate Student, Penn State

Talk Title: TBD

When & Where: Monday February 10<sup>th</sup>, 12:15pm-1:15pm Wartik Lab 108

### **Entomology**

Speaker & Affiliation: David Wagner, Professor, University of Connecticut

Talk Title: TBD

When & Where: Friday February 7<sup>th</sup>, 11:15am-12:05pm 107 Forest Resources Building

### **Sustainable Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences**

Speakers & Affiliation: Heather Preisendanz & Tamie Veith, Penn State

Talk Title: *PFAS Fate & Transports in Agroecosystems & Rural Water Supplies*

When & Where: Thursday February 27<sup>th</sup>, 11:00am-12:00pm Ag Sciences & Industries 118



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## UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### **Plant Institute Innovation Workshop**

February 6<sup>th</sup> from 9am-2:30pm

Register by January 28<sup>th</sup>

Explore the entrepreneurial ecosystem at PSU, engage with thought leaders, participate in workshop activities, and learn essential skills for innovation in plant science. Breakfast and lunch will be provided! **Scan QR code to RSVP!**



### **Careers In Industry Workshop: Part 1: Student Panel**

February 5<sup>th</sup> from 10:30-11:30

113 Ag Engineering Building

Student panel discussion featuring internship experiences at leading Ag companies like Bayer, Corteva Agriscience, FMC Corporation, and Robinson Nursery.

### **Bioinformatics Mixer**

Thursday February 6<sup>th</sup> 3:30-5 pm

PRCC Library (21 HUB).

Building a community up for sharing tools and methods via outreach. Food and drinks provided!

Interest form for the community:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7E0oU-s-cEx9lZyO0dlEZbuRq2QledObW8SrT7zUiNO1ajA/viewform>

### **Plant Institute Social Media Training and Campaign**

Work with PSU CommAgency's social media division to learn the ins and outs of running a social media campaign. We are looking for motivated people that would like to learn more about social media and communications to join our team! If interested, contact:

Dr. Elsa Sanchez: [ess11@psu.edu](mailto:ess11@psu.edu) Dr. Mark Guiltinan: [mjg9@psu.edu](mailto:mjg9@psu.edu) Jigeesha M: [jjm8394@psu.edu](mailto:jjm8394@psu.edu)

### **Hablemos de Agricultura**

Fridays 12-1:30 PM

In person: AgAccess Lounge (213 Ag Admin Bldg)

Virtual: <https://psu.zoom.us/j/92209892022> (Meeting ID: 922 0980 2002)

Join us virtually or in-person on Fridays to make new friends, learn and practice Spanish in a safe environment, and talk about agriculture!

### **PSU Alternative Proteins Project (APP) Chapter in Partnership with the Good Food Institute**

As a member of the Alt Protein Project, you'll have educational, professional, and social opportunities to learn more about sustainable food systems and connect with others working in the space!

Please fill out this [form](#) to be included in our email communications, and attend our next general body meeting is **4:30 PM on February 3rd at 252 Erickson Food Science Building** if you're interested in



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learning more. Feel free to reach out to Josie Krepps ([jek5999@psu.edu](mailto:jek5999@psu.edu)) or Morgan Failla ([mef5910@psu.edu](mailto:mef5910@psu.edu)) if you have questions.

### **Gamma Sigma Delta Research Expo**

This annual Expo provides undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral scholars with the opportunity to share their research with a larger audience -- those not in the same areas of professional interest.

**Abstract submission period:** February 1 - 21, 2025

**Additional Information:** <https://agsci.psu.edu/gsd/research-expo>

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### **Agricultural Genome to Phenome Initiative**

<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/funding-opportunities/agricultural-genome-phenome-initiative>

### **CAS Research Applications for Innovation (RAIN) (2025-26).**

<https://agsci.psu.edu/research/resources/funding/rain-grants-program>

### **Summer 2025 College of AG Undergraduate Research Award**

<https://agsci.psu.edu/students/research/award>

## CAMPUS PLANTS IN THE NEWS

### **Spotlight on the Commonwealth Campus Farms & Gardens.**

Link: <https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/commonwealth-campuses-promote-wellness-education-through-gardens>

### **Buckhout Lab's Hidden Gem Revealed!**

Link: <https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/hidden-gems-buckhout-greenhouses>

### **A Tree from the Moon in the Arboretum?**

Link: <https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/arboretum-penn-state-plant-moon-tree-childrens-garden>



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## DIGITAL CONNECTIONS

### **Plant Growth Chamber Needs Survey**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/plantinstitutefacilityneeds>

### **Join the Penn State Plant Institute**

<https://www.huck.psu.edu/join-a-center>

### **Plant Institute Website**

[www.huck.psu.edu/plantinstitute](http://www.huck.psu.edu/plantinstitute)

### **Listserver: To email all members.**

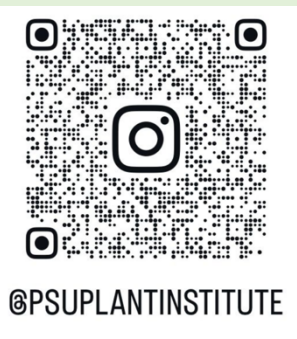
PSPI-ALL@lists.psu.edu

### **Social Media Links**

Instagram: [@PSUPLANTINSTITUTE](https://www.instagram.com/PSUPLANTINSTITUTE)

Linked In: [Plant Institute Penn State University](https://www.linkedin.com/company/plant-institute-penn-state-university)

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## Calls to action

### **Join a Plant Institute Leadership Team!**

Get involved in one of our Leadership Teams and gain valuable career development and networking experience, have fun and help us reach our goals. Open to staff, faculty, postdocs and grad students.

#### Teams

- Membership
- Plant Institute Scholars Group
- Science Communicators
- Public Education
- Partnerships
- Plant Art

Send an email to [mjg9@psu.edu](mailto:mjg9@psu.edu) for more information.

**Suggestion Box:** To provide suggestions for ways the Plant Institute can better help you, email [mjg9@psu.edu](mailto:mjg9@psu.edu)

*We would love to hear from you and will incorporate your suggestions into plans for the future of the Institute!*

