



April 2026

The Spore Print (4/27/26): Department of Plant Pathology April 2026 Newsletter



This is the last newsletter for this semester. Please enjoy these updates from our department for April 2026.

Anita representing the editorial team: Mary, Nosheen, Jessica, Francely, Taylor, Mason, Aalok, Sudeep, Monique, Jana, Cynthia, and Xianming.

If you have news you would like included in the *next newsletter*, please email anita.paneru@wsu.edu.

[Click here to access past newsletters!](#) You will also be able to download the PDF version there.

If you have any feedback, please fill out the [questionnaire](#) for the Spore Print.

Thank you to Ninh Khuu for providing many of the photos seen in the newsletter headings.

Updates



Spring 2026 Student-Invited Speaker: Dr. Kara Lanning

The **Plant Pathology Graduate Student Organization (PPGSO)** welcomed **Dr. Kara Lanning** to WSU last week (4/19-4/21) as the **Spring 2026 Student-invited speaker**. The visit was made possible with funds from the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA). Francely Flores Pablo and Taylor Mcnees were instrumental in planning the event.

Dr. Lanning completed her Ph.D. in Horticulture at WSU under Dr. Pat Moore (emeritus) and took many plant pathology courses during her degree. She is currently an Assistant Professor (recently granted tenure!) at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. She has taught 15 courses during her time at Pacific University, many of which she developed, and mentors many undergraduate students.

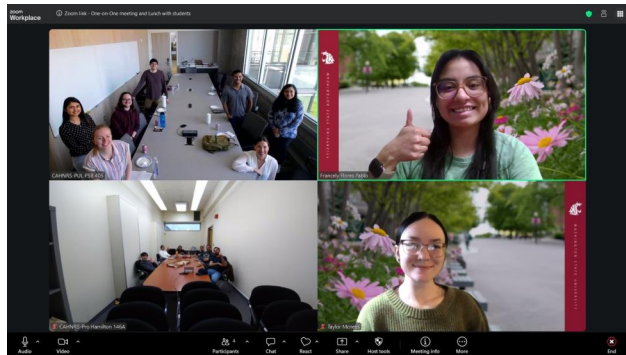
She met one-on-one with several WSU Plant Pathology faculty, postdocs, and graduate students. She presented an engaging seminar where she shared insights as a science educator. She invited graduate students to attend her undergraduate plant pathology lecture, where graduate students shared their experiences as plant pathology researchers and graduate students. Her visit was filled with refreshing and thoughtful conversations on topics from graduate student

recruitment, undergraduate student preparation, AI, tools as an educator, mentorship, and more.

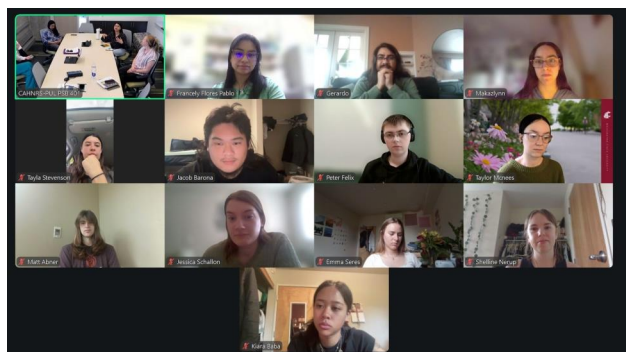
We are thankful to Dr. Lanning for making the trip, and to everyone in our department who made her visit so valuable.



1 - Dr. Kara Lanning after her seminar on Monday, April 20, 2026, with faculty, student, and staff members of the WSU Plant Pathology department. Photo: Megan Nickerson.



2 - Graduate students in Pullman and across RECs shared lunch on Monday, April 20, 2026 with Dr. Kara Lanning and discussed topics in teaching, mentorship, and more. Photo: Francely Flores Pablo.



3 - Dr. Kara Lanning invited graduate students to attend her undergraduate plant pathology lecture on Monday, April 20, 2026, and share their experiences in applied plant pathology research and graduate school. Thank you to Mary, Francely, Anita, Nosheen, Jessica, and Taylor for attending! Photo: Francely Flores Pablo.

Update from the Student and Postdoc Travel and Scholarship Awards Committee

Congratulations to the following individuals who will be receiving the Spring 2026 Departmental Travel Grant to attend scientific society conferences.

Mary Steele (PI: Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli)

Francely Flores (PI: Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli)

Nosheen Fatima (PI: Dr. Xianming Chen)

Elliot Marston (PI: Dr. Deven See)

Dipinte Gupta (PI: Dr. Hanu Pappu)

Sintayehu Daba (PI: Dr. Lindsey du Toit)

The Graduate Student and Postdoctorate Travel Awards Committee (Kiwamu Tanaka, Hanu Pappu, Scott Harper, and Chakradhar Mattupalli) congratulates the following individuals on receiving departmental travel awards to attend scientific society conferences.

Defense and Preliminary Exam Updates

Sudeep Poudel successfully passed his **PhD preliminary examination** on April 3rd. His research advisory committee members include Frank Zhao (chair), Scott Harper, Kylie Swisher Grimm (USDA ARS), and Michelle Moyer (Viticulture and Enology). We congratulate Sudeep and wish him continued success as he progresses in his doctoral studies.

Itsuhiro Ko successfully defended his **PhD dissertation** on April 16th. His dissertation is titled **“Engineering molecular immunity for root-knot nematode resistance in potato.”** His doctoral committee included Cynthia Gleason (supervisor), Kiwamu Tanaka, Frank Zhao, Stephen Ficklin (Hort), and Adam Steinbrenner (UW). Ko is an MPS student and an active member of the plant pathology department, having started SporePrint and serving as the PPGSO president in 2024/2025.

We congratulate Dr. Ko on this significant academic achievement and wish him the best in his career.

PPGSO bioinformatic consultations available by appointment

To better organize the PLP Bioinformatic Consultation Table, we decided to cancel our meeting hours on Thursday. Instead, we are open by appointment (15min - 30min, via Zoom or in person). Please provide the time you want to meet and your bioinformatic questions to the consultants below.

Ko <itsuhiro.ko@wsu.edu> : Kamiak HPC, Transcriptome and Genome analysis, Sequencing, Python/Linux coding

Megan <megan.nickerson@wsu.edu> : R coding: Statistics and data visualization

Staff Scientist Spotlight: Dr. Hanna Kehlet Delgado



4 - Dr. Hanna Kehlet Delgado

Position/Title: Staff Scientist

Advisor/PI: Dr. Maren Friesen

Academic/Professional Background:

- B.S. in Biology (Lewis-Clark State College, 2014)
- PhD in Microbiology (Oregon State University, 2020)

Hometown: Orofino, Idaho

Hobbies: Travelling, spending time outdoors, reading, and collecting antique prints

Pets: A cat, Winni, who is 11 years old

What made you interested in plant pathology/microbiology?

As an undergraduate, a student internship at the University of Idaho introduced me to microbial ecology and evolution. Since then, I have been fascinated by the diversity of microbes and their functions within the world around us. I grew up spending a lot of time outdoors, so focusing on plant and soil-associated microbes feels like a natural fit.

What is your favorite microbe/pathogen?

Rhizobia! Their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen with their partnership with legumes is so valuable. In addition, they are such a diverse group of bacteria, and I find learning about their genomic diversity and potential continually exciting.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I find it very rewarding to do science I love that I hope makes a difference, especially alongside the students and researchers in my lab group.

Community Corner

Learning Lunches. Thank you to everyone who attended the Learning Friday presentations in April by Drs. Svetlana Yurgel and Dmitri Mavrodi. If you were unable to attend, recordings are available (emailed from Melissa Bills).

Fall CRC Seminar: The Community Resource Committee is accepting suggestions for a Fall 2026 CRC-related seminar topic/speaker. Please email Dr. U'Ren (jana.uren@wsu.edu) with your suggestions.

April FUN Fact:

WA State is known for its diverse and important agricultural products, but did you know that WA has one of the highest proportions of female farmers among US states? In WA, ~42% of the state's ca. 60k farmers are women, compared to the national average of ~31-36%. A 2022 USDA [census](#) found that 1.2 million female farmers in the US operate 407 million acres of land and generate \$222 billion in agricultural sales. If you are interested in learning more, PBS recently released a new documentary, [Women's Work: The Untold Story of America's Female Farmers](#), about the historical and contemporary achievements of female farmers. The documentary features insightful interviews and highlights women's diverse backgrounds and agricultural practices across the nation.

--**The Community Resource and FUN Committee** (Chairs Jana U'Ren and Tim Paulitz)

Statewide Updates



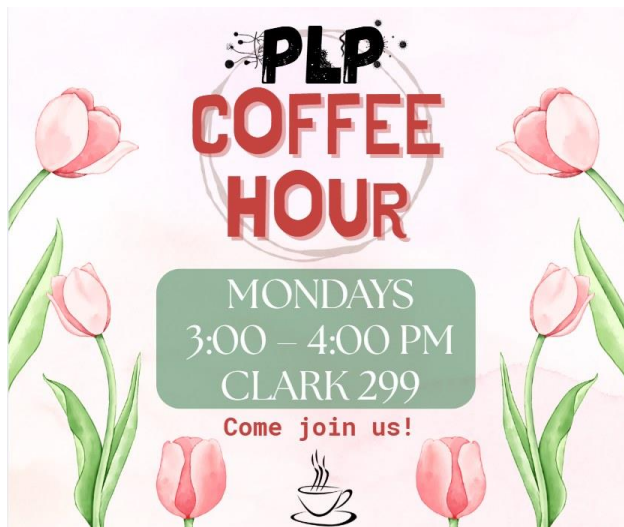
Pullman Updates

Join us for our **weekly departmental coffee hour**, held every Monday from 3:00 - 4:00 pm in Clark 299, right before the seminar.

A big thank-you to all the students who helped host this event!

Do you want to **host a PLP Coffee Hour** this semester? We're looking for **volunteers**. Sign up here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LafyV7ccu9pEbPtqG_iNG643oV2luPX0AULgeJEu34s/edit?usp=sharing



5 - PLP coffee hour flyer. Photo: Francely Flores

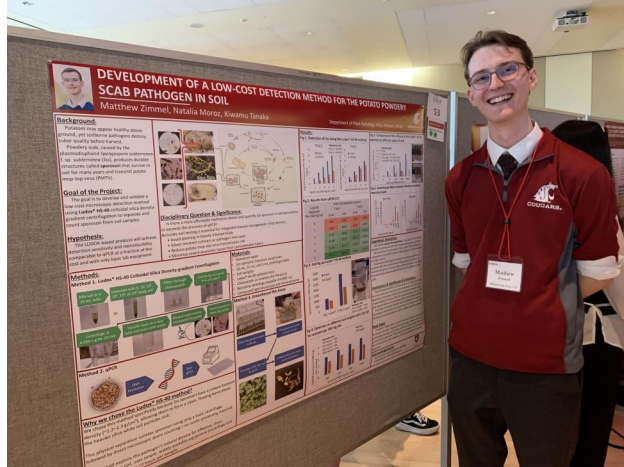
On March 27th, **Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka, Lindsey du Toit, and Jana U'Ren** attended the **WSU Showcase Banquet**, which is held annually to celebrate faculty awards and promotions.

Dr. Tanaka and U'Ren celebrated their promotions to Full and Associate Professor, respectively.



6 - From Left to Right: Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka, Yuki Tanaka (Dr. Tanaka's wife), Dr. Jana U'Ren, and Dr. Lindsey du Toit.

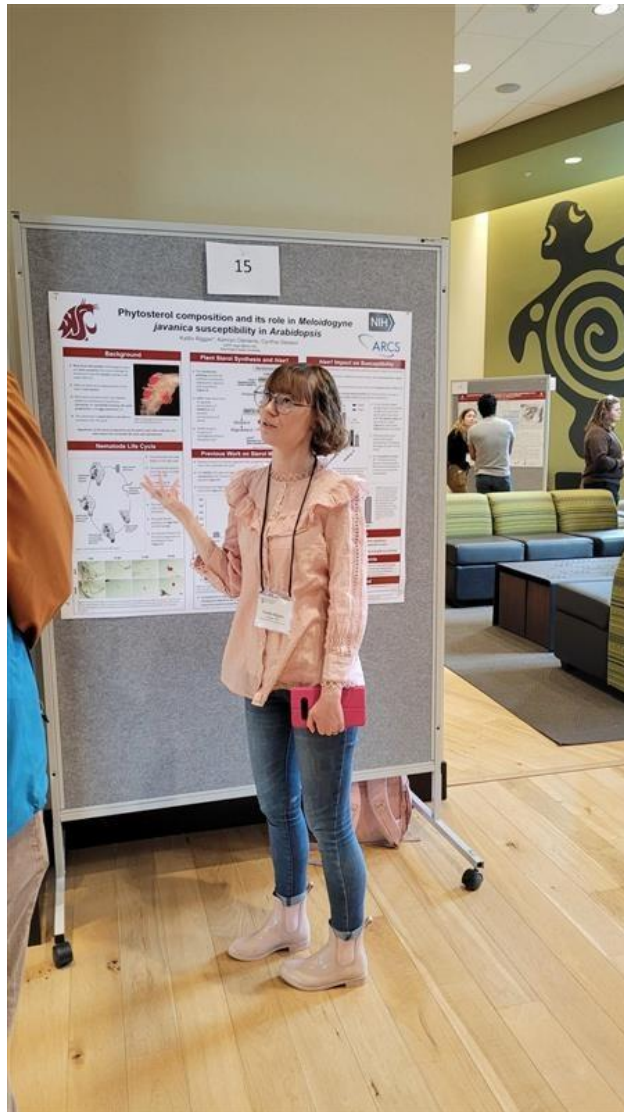
Matthew Zimmel, an undergraduate student from Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka's lab and a participant in the CAHNRS Internship Program, received the [Early Career Award](#) at WSU's 2026 SURCA event on March 23rd. This year's event set participation records (295 undergraduate presenters and 251 posters) across all six WSU campuses. It also had its largest-ever judging team, with 258 volunteers - including many from our department.



7 - Matthew Zimmer, from Dr. Tanaka's lab presenting a poster at the SURCA event. Photo Source: Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka

Kaitlin Riggan, a PhD student from Dr. Cynthia Gleason's lab, presented her poster and was awarded second place at the **Annual NIH Protein Biotechnology Training Program 2026 Symposium: 'Possibilities & Pivots'**. Her poster was titled "Phytosterol composition and its role in *Meloidogyne javanica* susceptibility in Arabidopsis".

This event featured presentations from both student researchers and invited speakers, along with poster sessions evaluated by judges and recognized with awards. The symposium is a great opportunity for trainees in the program to showcase their research.



8 - Kaitlin Riggan speaks during the afternoon poster session of the symposium. Her poster was awarded second place in the second-year category.

Mount Vernon Updates

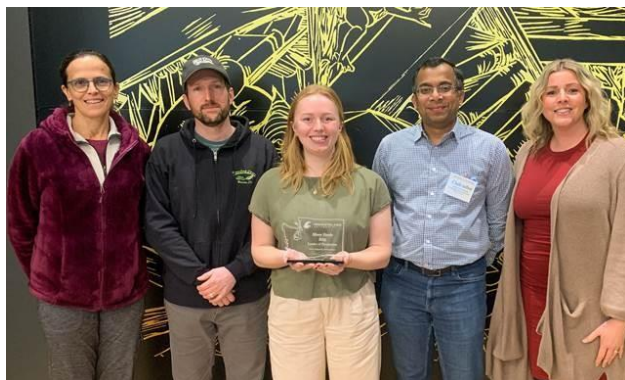
Mary Steele was honored as a **2026 Washington State University Leader of Distinction** in the Graduate Student category during the annual awards ceremony in Pullman. Mary was joined in recognition by her advisors, Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli, Dr. Lindsey du Toit, Tatum Weed (interim Director of NWREC and PREC) as well as Dr. Michael Gordon (Scientific Assistant Senior in Dr. Lindsey du Toit's VSP program). Her family also shared in the moment virtually via Zoom. Celebrating Mary's achievements alongside outstanding women leaders made the evening especially meaningful, showcasing the impact of WSU graduate scholars.



9 - Mary Steele receiving the **2026 Washington State University Leader of Distinction Award** alongside President Cantwell and organizers Ayesha Ahmed and Jessica Perone.



10 - Mary Steele alongside other awardees of the Leader of Distinction Award.



11 - Mary Steele with nominators **Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli, Dr. Lindsey du Toit, and Tatum Weed** (interim Director of NWREC and PREC), and **Dr. Michael Gordon** (Scientific Assistant Senior with Dr. du Toit lab) during award ceremony.

Prosser Updates

Graduate students and postdoctoral scholars from the Prosser Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center (IAREC) participated in the 2026 Honoring Undergraduate and Graduate

Scholars Symposium (HUGSS), while faculty members attended and contributed as judges, supporting the evaluation of student presentations.



12 - Attendees from HUGSS.

GPSA Updates

No update.

Herbarium Happenings: Shaw Mycological Herbarium



New Donation of over 100 Polypore Specimens to Shaw Herbarium

The Shaw Herbarium has a particularly strong collection of wood decay fungi found in our temperate PNW forests, thanks to many decades of work by past WSU forest pathologists like Jack Rogers and Gardner Shaw himself. Early this year, we received a valuable addition to our polypore collection from Regina Johnson, a restoration ecologist with the Washington Dept of Natural Resources and a member of the South Sound Mushroom Club (based in Olympia) and the North American Mycological Association. Regina offered us a wide selection of specimens in a range of taxa, nearly all from sites in western Washington. From those we chose about 100 specimens representing taxa that we didn't already have, that were on new hosts for our collection, or from areas of Washington not already represented in our collection. She had already thoroughly dried, carefully bagged, and labeled with a detailed provenance each specimen - exactly the kind of collection we love to receive! These were, of course, cycled through our -20°C freezer to eliminate any possible insect pests before the accession process began.

Herbarium Assistant Megan Pyle is working on them this spring, so these beautiful polypores will soon be searchable within our collection in the public access website MycoPortal:

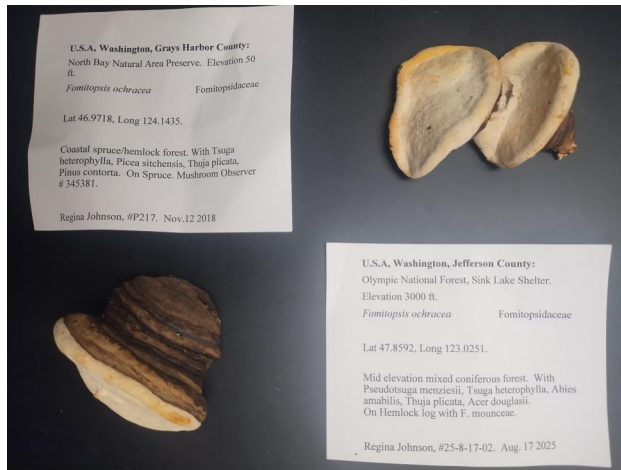
Caption for photos: *New Polypore specimens donated to the Shaw Herbarium by Regina Johnson in winter 2026*



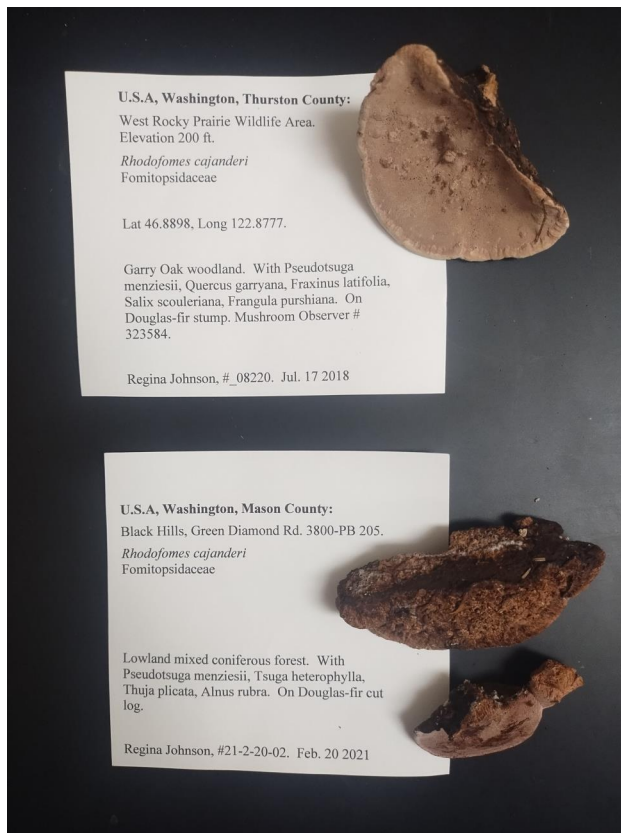
13 - *Ganoderma oregonense*. Photo Source: Monique Slipher



14 - *Laetiporus conifericola* and *Daedalea quercina*. Photo Source: Monique Slipher.



15 - *Fomitopsis ochraceae*. Photo Source: Monique Slipher



16 - *Rhodofomes cajanderi*. Photo Source: Monique Slipher

Publications



Delgado Santander, R., and Zhao, Y. 2026. Environmental conditions and ecological interactions among microorganisms isolated from diseased samples shape their biocontrol efficacy against *Erwinia amylovora*. *Frontiers in Microbiology*, 17, 1816023.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2026.1816023>

Manna, S., and Zhao, Y. 2026. Bacterial canker of sweet cherry (*Prunus avium*): Disease etiology, epidemiology, and current management practices. *Plant Health Cases*, (2026), phcs20260004.

<https://doi.org/10.1079/planthealthcases.2026.0004>

Rawale, K. S., Schroeder, K., McPhee, K., Chen, Y. C., **Chen, W.**, and Gill, K. S. 2026. Identification of novel sources of Ascochyta blight resistance in wild relatives of chickpea. *Journal of Phytopathology*, 174(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jph.70292>

Xu, X., Li, G., Wolabu, T. W., **Wang, M.**, Bai, G., **Chen, X.**, Bernardo, A., Bian, R., Carver, B.F., and Wu, Y. 2026. Molecular mapping of quantitative trait loci for stripe rust resistance in wheat landrace PI 622129. *Phytopathology*[®], PHYTO-09. <https://doi.org/10.1094/PHYTO-09-25-0314-R>

Please let us know if we missed your publication so we can include it next month.

Funding and Opportunities



American Phytopathological Society Funding and Opportunities

For Plant Pathologists Working Internationally

- The [Global Experience Program Fund](#) supports scientists conducting training and outreach in developing countries—including collaboration with local institutions, development of outreach materials, and demonstration of diagnostic tools.

For Academics Collaborating Beyond Campus

- The [Plant Pathology Experiential Fund](#) offers two awards (individual and departmental) supporting professional development at non-academic institutions, including industry labs and governmental agencies.
- The [Steven C. Nelson Early Career Development Fellowship](#) funds travel and short-term visits to host institutions, industries, or agencies for graduate and post-doctoral researchers.

For Students

- [Forest Pathology Student Scholarship](#) provides funding for graduate and undergraduate students pursuing careers in forest pathology, covering educational expenses like books and research equipment.
- The [Frank L. Howard Undergraduate Fellowship](#) supports undergraduate research projects in plant pathology, offering funding for stipends and research expenses to encourage the next generation of plant pathologists.

The deadline is April 30. Please check the [Review eligibility requirements](#).

WSDA Fellowship

WSDA is pleased to announce a **fully funded one-year opportunity for emerging scientists** to apply cutting-edge agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) research to real-world public policy and program design.

- **What:** Fully funded, 12-month Science-to-Policy Research Fellowship
- **Who:** WSU or UW PhD Candidates (post-QE), Postdoctoral Scholars, Research Associates, or equivalent early-career research positions
- **When:** June 2026 - May 2027
- **Apply by:** May 15th at 5 pm

- For any questions, email WaSHI@agr.wa.gov or attend an informal virtual office hour on April 10th from 11-12 PT.

GPSA Travel Grant

GPSA travel grants are available year-round and are awarded as post-travel reimbursements for out-of-pocket travel costs. Pullman Service and Activity fee-paying students are eligible to apply. Please see all the information on the GPSA grants website [here](#). Contact gpsa.granst@wsu.edu if you have questions.

[Here](#) is a list of all available funding worldwide. Log in using your WSU account and refine the search.

Seminars



Dr. Cynthia Gleason is leading a seminar series in Spring 2026, on most Mondays from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Today is our last seminar. We would like to thank Dr. Gleason for wonderful seminar instructor.

Zoom Meeting ID: 959 0545 7360

Zoom Password: 2488

- January 26: **Cynthia Gleason** (Seminar Instructor, WSU)
- February 2: **Sudeep Poudel** (Student Speaker)
- February 9: **Prabu Gnanasekaran** (Guest Speaker, WSU)
- February 16: Holiday
- February 23: **Anthony DeLuca** (Student Speaker)
- March 2: **Eric Holmes** (Guest Speaker, University of Idaho)
- March 9: **Francely Flores** (Student Speaker)
- March 16: Spring Break
- March 23: **Elaine Larsen** (Student Speaker)
- March 30: **Chakradhar Mattupalli** (Guest Speaker, WSU)
- April 6: **Kylie Swisher Grimm** (Guest Speaker, USDA)
- April 13: **Jeremy Johnson** (Student Speaker)
- April 20: **Kara Lanning** (Student Invited Speaker, Pacific University, Oregon)
- April 27- **Oleksandra Shabliy** (Student Speaker)

Jobs



Postdoctoral Positions

- The **University of Kentucky** is seeking a highly motivated postdoctoral researcher to investigate the metabolic and biochemical mechanisms underlying **plant immunity**. The details can be found [here](#).
- **The University of Florida** is looking for a scientist to work on the fitness impacts of rice immune receptors on reproduction. More details can be found [here](#).

Research Specialist Positions

- The plant pathology program at **Virginia Tech's Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC)** is seeking a research specialist to work on disease management research serving commercial growers. More details can be found [here](#).
- The **Berry and Potato Pathology (BPP) Program and the Vegetable Seed Pathology (VSP) Program** at WSU's Mount Vernon Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center (NWREC) are looking for a scientific assistant senior to work on

senior-level field, greenhouse, and laboratory research. The application can be found [here](#).

Industry, and Other Non-Academic Positions

- **USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)** has many new vacancies. For job vacancy details, click [here](#).
- **Agdia, Inc** (biotechnology company) is looking for a lab manager. To apply: email resume, including references, to Samantha Juszczak (Laboratory Director): samantha@agdia.com.

Faculty Positions

- **The University of Florida** is looking for an Instructional Assistant Professor (100% teaching). The deadline is May 30, 2026. For more details and to apply, click [here](#).