



Summer 2026

The Spore Print (7/27/26): Department of Plant Pathology Summer 2026 Newsletter



Please enjoy these updates from our department for Summer 2026.

Francely and Anita representing the editorial team: Taylor, Anthony, Jeremy, Aalok, Abu, Sudeep, Monique, Jana, Cheryl, Cynthia, and Xianming.

If you have news you would like included in the *next newsletter*, please email f.florespablo@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 and Lindsey du Toit for providing many of the photos seen in the newsletter headings.

Updates



Field Plant Pathology (PI P 525)

This summer, students in **Field Plant Pathology (PI P 525)** traveled across Washington State for a week in June and a week in July to learn about plant pathology and understand the importance of our profession in real world agricultural and horticultural systems. The course included visits to farms, laboratories, nurseries, orchards, vineyards, seed production fields, seed company pathology lab, USDA APHIS PPQ facility at SeaTac Airport, WSDA Seed Lab in Yakima, and all four WSU Research and Extension Centers.

At each stop, students learned directly from growers, researchers, Extension specialists, diagnosticians, regulatory agencies, and various industry professionals. This experience helped students understand the complexity of production practices in relation to disease management, systematic approach to diagnosing plant problems, the importance of listening to growers to understand their expertise, knowledge, philosophies, and risk management in relation to plant diseases, regulatory aspects of agriculture and disease risk, and the need to communicate scientific information clearly and develop practical solutions for effective, feasible disease management strategies in agriculture, forestry, and horticulture.

A special thank you goes to **Dr. Lindsey du Toit** for the significant time and effort she puts into organizing this course every two years. Her work provided students with a valuable opportunity to learn about the different roles and career paths available in field plant pathology, and real-world context for so much of what is learned in traditional courses in the classroom.

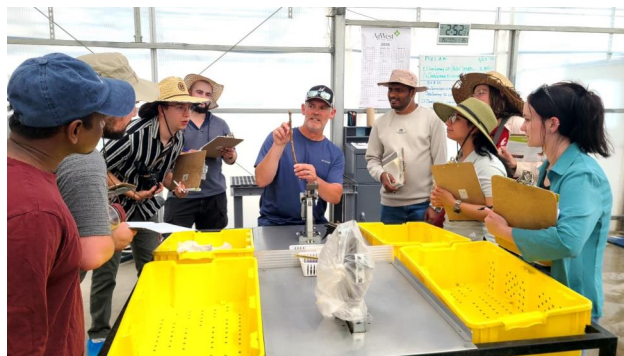
Enjoy a few photos from the course, shared by Dr. Lindsey du Toit.



1 - Lenwood Farms. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



2 - Carrot seed crop. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



3 - Grafting grapevines. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



4 - Hop production, breeding, and diseases. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



5 - Wildwood Park - Tree health. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



6 - Potato production and diseases. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



7 - Stemilt warehouse. Photo: Lindsey du Toit



8 - Sprayer application policy and research. Photo: Lindsey du Toit

2026 WSU Potato Field Day

On Thursday, June 25, the WSU Potato Field Day was held at the WSU Othello Research and Extension Unit. Presentations included **“Meet Your New Potato Pathologist—and How to Put Me to Work for You”** by Dr. Vini Garnica; **“An Update on PAPAS: A Systems Approach to Nematode Control in U.S. Potatoes”** by Dr. Cynthia Gleason; and **“Management of Verticillium Wilt in Potato”** by Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli and Francely Flores Pablo. A complete photo album can be found [here](#).



9 - Dr. Vini Garnica presents **“Meet Your New Potato Pathologist—and How to Put Me to Work for You”** at the 2026 WSU Potato Field Day in Othello. Photo: Kiwamu Tanaka



10 - Dr. Cynthia Gleason presents ***"An Update on PAPAS: A Systems Approach to Nematode Control in U.S. Potatoes"*** at the 2026 WSU Potato Field Day in Othello. Photo: Vini Garnica.



11 - Dr. Chakradhar presents ***"Management of Verticillium Wilt in Potato"*** at the 2026 WSU Potato Field Day in Othello. Photo: Adam Elcan.



12 - Francely Flores Pablo presents “*Management of Verticillium Wilt in Potato*” at the 2026 WSU Potato Field Day in Othello.
Photo: Adam Elcan.

Graduate Student Updates

Incoming Students

Eileen Froshiesar is joining Dr. Lindsey du Toit’s Vegetable Seed Pathology lab as a Ph.D. student. She earned her B.S. in Environmental Science from Pacific University and her M.S. in Crop Science from Oregon State University, where she studied onion thrips and iris yellow spot virus. Her Ph.D. research will focus on bacterial wilt of bean seed crops caused by *Curtobacterium flaccumfaciens* pv. *flaccumfaciens*.

Welcome, Eileen!



If you know of any additional incoming graduate students who should be included in this section of *The Spore Print*, please contact Francely Flores at f.florespablo@wsu.edu.

Graduate student honors and awards

Travel Awards to Plant Health 2026

Congratulations to:

- **Harpreet Kaur** received an APS Student Travel Award to attend Plant Health 2026 in Providence, Rhode Island.
- **Sudeep Poudel** received the APS Tsune Kosuge Student Travel Fund to attend Plant Health 2026 in Providence, Rhode Island.
- **Nosheen Fatima** received the department and Western IPM Travel Grants to attend Plant Health 2026 in Providence, Rhode Island.
- **Mary Steele** received a travel award from the [APS Foundation Arthur Kelman Student Travel Fund](#) to attend Plant Health 2026. She will present a poster on the relative susceptibility of highbush blueberry phenological stages to infection by *Botrytis*.

CAHNRS Scholarship

Congratulations to **Harpreet Kaur** and **Sheersa Manna**, who were awarded the Everett and Helen Kreizinger Scholarship for the 2026–2027 academic year.

2026 John M. Webster Outstanding Student Award

Congratulations to **Itsuhiro Ko**, who recently defended his doctoral dissertation in the Department of Plant Pathology. He was selected for the **2026 John M. Webster Outstanding Student Award**, the highest award a graduate student can receive from the Society of Nematologists. Ko received the award at the SON2026 meeting in Baltimore, Maryland.



13 - Itsuhiro Ko with four generations of his research mentors (from left to right): Dr. Claude, Dr. Sebastian, Dr. Cynthia, and Dr. Shahid



14 - Itsuhiro Ko presenting his research.

APS Art in Phytopathology contest

Francely Flores was selected as one of six finalists in the APS Art in Phytopathology contest for her piece, *WANTED: Pratylenchus spp. and Verticillium dahliae*. The idea for the artwork originated from an assignment in Dr. Cynthia Gleason's class. Her artwork will be featured in

slideshows before the Plant Health 2026 Plant Diagnostic Bowl sessions and other conference events.



15 - WANTED: *Pratylenchus* spp. and *Verticillium dahliae*. Photo: Francely

Those interested in sharing graduate student honors, awards, scholarships, fellowships, or other recognitions for inclusion in this section of *The Spore Print* can contact Francely Flores at f.florespablo@wsu.edu.

PPGSO Bioinformatics consultation update

The PPGSO would like to extend a very special thank you to **Itsuhiro Ko** and **Megan Nickerson** for providing bioinformatics consultations to students in the Department of Plant Pathology. As Ko and Megan move on to new opportunities, we wish them all the best in their next chapters!

We are now looking for students, postdocs, or other department members who may be interested in **volunteering as bioinformatics consultants**. Consultations can be offered by appointment, either through Zoom or in person. Those interested in contributing and having their contact information included in this section of *The Spore Print* are encouraged to contact Francely Flores (f.florespablo@wsu.edu).

Student Spotlight: Jeremy Johnson



Position/Title: Masters

Advisor/PI: Dr. George Vandemark

Academic/Professional Background: Bachelor's of Arts and Science in Biochemistry from WSU

Hometown: Everett Washington

Hobbies: I enjoy hiking, weightlifting, martial arts, cooking, baking and photography.

Pets: I have a Newfie. Her name is Noelle and she will be turning six years old in December.

What made you interested in plant pathology/microbiology?

I was the President of my gardening club in high school and always loved science. When I was earning my undergraduate I worked in a few different plant biology labs and thought plant disease was the most interesting topic of all the labs I worked in.

What is your favorite microbe/pathogen?

I like *Phytophthora infestans* for the historical impact it has had on the world. It is the reason my family immigrated from Europe, and I think it opened the eyes of the world to the importance of plant pathology.

Community Corner

PLP Fall Welcome Picnic

Join us for the PLP Fall Welcome Picnic!

- **Date:** Sunday, August 30
- **Time:** 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Kruegel Park, 705 SE Dilke St., Pullman, WA 99163

Please use the [Google sheet link](#) to sign up for the potluck or volunteer. More information will be shared soon!

Statewide Updates



Pullman Updates

The Gleason lab had a visitor!

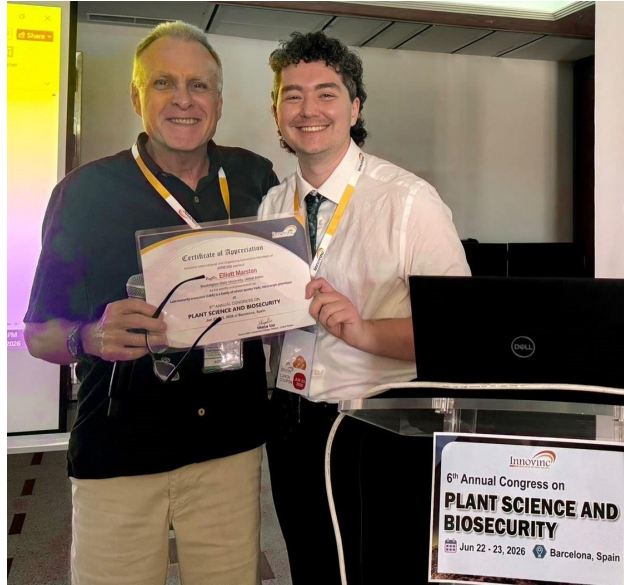
Dr. Omowumi Adewuyi is a nematologist and researcher at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria. Her work focuses on plant-parasitic nematodes with a focus on their impact on staple crops like yams, cassava, and plantains. She also works

with a team to develop effective pest management strategies to help growers deal with nematodes. **Dr. Adewuyi** visited the Gleason lab in June 2026 for approximately three weeks. She shadowed **Cynthia Gleason** and members of the Gleason lab to learn about molecular techniques in nematology such as species-specific PCR and LAMP assays. She also took day trips with members of the Gleason lab to Elk River Falls and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.



Representing WSU at an International conference

Elliott received a Graduate Student and Postdoctorate Travel Award from the department to attend the 6th Annual Congress on Plant Science & Biosecurity in Barcelona, Spain (June 22-23, 2026). He delivered a 20-minute talk entitled "Late-maturity alpha-amylase (LMA) is a family of wheat quality traits, not a single phenotype" to a group of international audience of plant scientists and biosecurity experts. He served as a moderator for the full two-day program representing our department in a leadership role at an international conference!



16 - Elliott attended the 6th Annual Congress on Plant Science & Biosecurity in Barcelona, Spain



17 - Elliott attended the 6th Annual Congress on Plant Science & Biosecurity in Barcelona, Spain

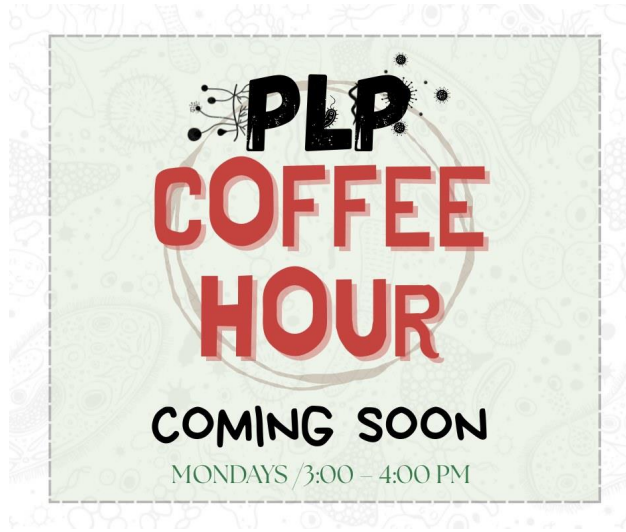
APS Educational Award

Dr. Sean W. McCotter, a postdoctoral researcher in **Dr. Cynthia Gleason's lab**, received financial support from APS to pursue educational activities outside the APS Annual Meeting.

Weekly departmental coffee hour - Coming soon!

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/1IBadLq12gg_rlYRk6qwUxCJHjY0N0hFO3neJETOTnzc/edit?usp=sharing



18 - PLP coffee hour flyer. Photo: Francely Flores

Mount Vernon Updates

2026 class of the Washington State Academy of Sciences

Congratulations to **Lindsey du Toit** who was one of seven WSU faculty elected to join the 2026 class of the Washington State Academy of Sciences. “For outstanding research contributions to plant pathology and food security, and for leadership at the statewide, national, and global levels, including past president of the American Phytopathological Society and current Chair of the WSU Department of Plant Pathology.” Lindsey was nominated by Kevin Murphy, and she notes, *“I hope I can do justice to this organization.”* Of that we have no doubt.

[New Members Elected to Washington State Academy of Sciences](#)

Excellence in Science Award

Congratulations to **Lindsey du Toit** on receiving ***Excellence in Science Award*** from the Seed Science Foundation of the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA). This award recognizes outstanding achievements by a public or private researcher whose accomplishments have made significant contributions to the seed industry. She received the award on 10th June at the [ASTA's Leadership Summit](#) in Milwaukee, WI.

Seed Science Foundation:
Excellence in Science Award

The Seed Science Foundation's Excellence in Science Award recognizes outstanding achievements by a public or private researcher whose accomplishments have had an impact in the areas of Breeding Systems, Seed Quality, Seed Production and Technology, Seed Health and Pathology, Digital Agriculture, or Seed Applied Technology.



▶ **Dr. Lindsey du Toit** | Washington State University

Dr. du Toit is the Alfred Christianson Distinguished Professor of Vegetable Seed Pathology and Extension Plant Pathologist at Washington State University's Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center in Mount Vernon. Her work focuses on the epidemiology and management of diseases affecting vegetable seed crops in the Pacific Northwest, and she leads the Pacific Northwest Vegetable Extension Group, connecting researchers and industry to address challenges facing vegetable growers in our region.

She holds degrees from the University of Natal-Pietermaritzburg in South Africa and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she earned her PhD in plant pathology.

Dr. du Toit has risen to the highest levels of her profession – serving as President of the American Phytopathological Society and being elected a Fellow of that organization in 2022. She has also been recognized with the "Friend of the Industry" Award from the Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association for her outstanding contributions to growers in our region.



Francely Flores participated in the WSU Everett Student Showcase and Open House on May 8, 2026, where she shared her research on Verticillium wilt management in potato and spinach seed production systems. The event provided an opportunity to connect with students, faculty, and community members and highlight the agricultural research conducted at the WSU Mount Vernon Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center.



19 - Francely Flores participated in the WSU Everett Student Showcase. Photo: Erick Spitzer

Mary Steele and **Francely Flores** participated in an Options High School student tour at the WSU Mount Vernon NWREC on April 29, 2026. Approximately 40 students participated in the tour, during which Francely and Mary led the plant pathology station with hands-on activities and demonstrations.



20 - Potato disease station prepared for the Options High School tour at WSU Mount Vernon NWREC. Photo: Francely Flores



21 - Mary Steele explains her plant pathology research. Photo: Francely Flores

Prosser Updates

PGSA Summer Lunch

At the beginning of Summer 2026, the Prosser Graduate Student Organization (PGSO) at IAREC organized a summer lunch. I've attached a few photos in case you'd like to include them.



22 - PGSA Summer Lunch. Photo: PGSA IAREC via Cheryl



23 - PGSA Summer Lunch. Photo: PGSA IAREC via Cheryl

Baby Shower Celebration

In mid-June, we celebrated a baby shower for Poonam, a postdoctoral researcher/research associate in Dr. Naidu's lab. I've also attached a few photos if you'd like to include them.



24 - Baby Shower Celebration. Photo: PGSA IAREC via cherryl



25 - Baby Shower Celebration. Photo: PGSA IAREC via cherryl

GPSA Updates

No update.

Herbarium Happenings: Shaw Mycological Herbarium



Dare to Dream program students encounter the world of fungi

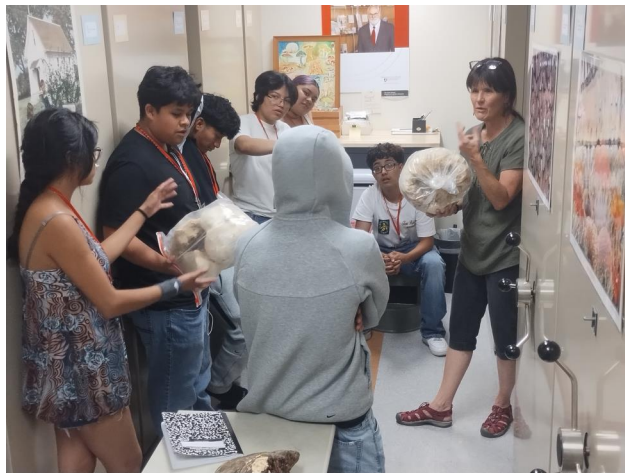
About 30 migrant high school students participating in WSU's Dare to Dream week-long academy visited the Shaw Herbarium on June 25th, hosted by Monique Slipper, Collections Manager. Plant Pathology masters student Jeremy Johnson (profiled elsewhere in this newsletter) volunteered to be a biology instructor for this summer's program. He took Dr. Jana U'Ren's Mycology course last fall and visited the Herbarium as part of the class. Building on that experience, he chose to structure his curriculum around visits to the Herbarium and several other museum collections on the WSU Pullman campus.

Many of the junior and senior level students spoke limited English so a translator accompanied them. Given this partial language barrier, it was especially important to convey the basic information about our fungal collections in an accessible and entertaining way. Fungi was collected from areas near the students' hometowns in central Washington, helping them develop a personal connection to the otherwise unfamiliar dried specimens on display. Several students asked very perceptive questions, and most engaged more eagerly when given the chance to see, touch and hold some of our more unusual "charismatic mega-fungi". They marveled at some of our huge heavy polypores, the equally large but light-as-styrofoam giant puffballs, examples of slime molds, and the always-entertaining, somewhat phallic-looking *Battarrea* specimens.

After the end of the tour, Jeremy said "My goal with bringing the kids to the collection was to introduce them to an area of biology that they might have had limited experience in.... I felt that getting to see the collection when taking mycology showed me there was so much diversity in fungi and wanted to give the students the same opportunity to experience that as well".



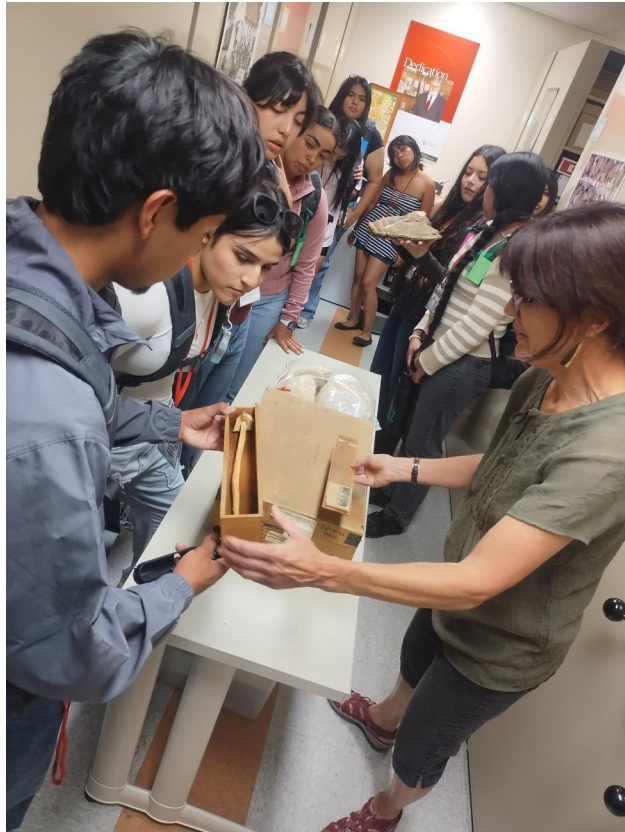
26 - Dare to Dream students wait in hallway to enter Shaw Herbarium.



27 - Collections Manager Monique Slipper shows giant puffballs to students.



28 - Dare to Dream students weigh a giant polypore at the Herbarium.



29 - Students examine a smaller boxed Battarreia specimen.

Publications



Alizadeh, A., Choi, Y.-J., Derie, M.L., Hinrichs-Berger, J., Ploch, S., **du Toit, L.J.**, and Thines, M. 2026. *Pustula echinaceae* sp. nov. (Albuginales, Oomycota), a new species causing white blister rust disease on the ornamental plant *Echinacea purpurea* (L.) Moench. European Journal of Plant Pathology: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10658-026-03250-1>

Kaur, H., Santander, R. D., Poudel, S., and Zhao, Y. 2026. Structural and phenotypical diversities of *Erwinia amylovora* populations in Washington. J. Plant Pathol. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42161-026-02230-y>

Mnguni, F.C., Shin, G.Y., Aegerter, B., **du Toit, L.J.**, Derie, M.L., and Coutinho, T. 2026. Draft genome sequences of *Rahnella perminowiae*, *R. aceris*, and *R. aquatilis* isolated from onion bulbs (*Allium cepa* L.) displaying symptoms of bacterial rot. Journal of Plant Pathology 108:791-795. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42161-025-02038-2>

Neupane, B., Marston, E.J., Brueggeman, R.S., and See, D. Barley genetics elucidate the genetic architecture of cold-induced late maturity α -amylase for wheat improvement. *Sci Rep* (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-58186-7>

Shelton, M., **Mattupalli, C.**, DeVetter, L. W., Rogers, E., Shrestha, S., and Miles, C. A. 2026. Tea (*Camellia sinensis*) cuttings of 14 cultivars differed in propagation success in western Washington. *HortScience* 61:1828–1836. <https://doi.org/10.21273/HORTSCI19538-26>

Manna, S., Delgado Santander, R., and Zhao, Y. 2026. Efficacy of chemical treatments and culture practices in managing cut-wound infections by *Pseudomonas syringae* in sweet cherry. *Plant Dis.* <https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-03-26-0482-RE>

Poudel, S., Zhao, Y. 2026 Fire blight forecasting: history, regional considerations, limitations, and future directions. *J Plant Pathol.* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42161-026-02219-7>

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

Funding and Opportunities



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. Mavrodi will lead the Fall 2026 seminar series. Seminars will be held every **Monday** from **4:10 to 5:00 p.m.** The complete speaker schedule will be shared soon.*

Jobs



Postdoctoral Positions

- North Dakota State University is hiring a postdoctoral researcher to lead a USDA-APHIS soybean pest and pathogen survey. The position is posted [here](#).
- USDA-ARS is hiring a postdoctoral fellow to work on postharvest diseases of fresh fruits, including gray mold in table grapes. More information is available [here](#).
- The Antony-Babu Laboratory is hiring a postdoctoral research associate to work on cotton soilborne diseases, field pathology, pathogen genomics, and diagnostic development. The position is posted [here](#).
- USDA-ARS is offering a postdoctoral fellowship focused on genetic and metabolic resistance to pests and pathogens of sweet corn and maize. More information is available [here](#).
- The LSU AgCenter is hiring a postdoctoral researcher to work on fungal and plant bioinformatics, including whole-genome, RNA-sequencing, and metagenomic datasets. The position is posted [here](#).

Technician, Industry, and Other Non-Academic Positions

- Dr. Svetlana Yurgel's research group at WSU is hiring a half-time laboratory technician in Pullman to support plant-microbe interaction and agricultural microbiology research.
- Limagrain Vegetable Seeds is hiring a Trait and Pathology Research Scientist in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France, to work on disease resistance in tomato and pepper. The position is posted [here](#).

Faculty Positions

- The Department of Plant Pathology at National Chung Hsing University in Taiwan is hiring a tenure-track or non-tenure-track assistant or associate professor. The position will begin August 1, 2027. More information is available [here](#).

Explore and Learn!



Have a podcast, webinar, article, video, or other educational resource to recommend? Submit it through the resource-sharing form for possible inclusion in a future issue of The Spore Print.

Interested in plant diagnostics?

Check out the APS Plantopia podcast episode **“A Conversation With Four Clinic Directors Behind the National Plant Diagnostic Network.”** In this episode, four university clinic directors discuss the history and importance of the National Plant Diagnostic Network, their roles in plant diagnostic clinics, common misconceptions about diagnostics, and some of the most unusual samples they have received.

Listen here: <https://www.plantopiapodcast.org/69>

Recommended by Francely Flores

Enjoy!