



The Leaflet

MPS Website & Giving



The newsletter of Washington State University's Molecular Plant Sciences Graduate Program - Sept 2026, Edition 1

The Molecular Plant Sciences (MPS) Graduate Program is Washington State University's (WSU) largest intercollege, interdepartmental graduate program. Our mission is to educate and develop leaders in molecular plant sciences by providing competencies and skills needed by professional scientists in diverse careers.

Contact Information:

General Program Inquires:
molecular.plants@wsu.edu

(509) – 335 – 7619

Director:

laura.bartley@wsu.edu

Assistant Director:

dcrowder@wsu.edu

Dear MPS Community,

Welcome to the MPS newsletter, *The Leaflet*. This newsletter is part of our ongoing effort to ensure that the MPS program remains relevant and valuable by connecting students and alumni. Of course, we will also keep using LinkedIn and other social media, so please follow MPSatWSU, if you like.

You can use the QR code to find the MPS website (<https://mps.wsu.edu>) and check out the seminars we are hosting (now available by zoom as well as in person, if you might want to join).

We would love to hear from you if you have ideas, opportunities, or news you would like to share with the community. We will be asking students and alumni to provide highlights periodically and welcome volunteers. We are also eager to host alumni speakers and visits.

Please send this on to MPS-friends and send an email to get on the distribution list, including to request physical copies. With your help, we can continue to empower students to conduct meaningful plant science research and gain the versatile skills needed for broad career success.

Keep in Touch!

Laura Bartley, Ph.D., MPS Director & Dave Crowder, Ph.D., MPS Assistant Director



MPS Student Highlight: Camille Wagstaff, Crowder Lab, WSU Dept. of Entomology

After earning a B.S. in Anthropology and minors in Native/Indigenous Studies, Music, and Dance from Boise State University, Wagstaff began her Ph.D. in MPS in 2021. Her research focuses on identifying plant pathogens and understanding their transmission, with a focus on the beet leafhopper (BLH), a major insect vector. She uses gut content analysis to characterize BLH feeding networks and assess pathogen spread across agricultural landscapes. This work produced the first reports of beet curly top virus, '*Candidatus Phytoplasma trifolii*', and *Spiroplasma citri* in Washington cannabis. She published a gut content study revealing that wild mustards serve as an overwintering hosts for BLH and associated pathogens, while kochia and Russian thistle are key BLH hosts during the growing season. A novel finding was evidence of BLH feeding on trees, prompting ongoing research to determine whether trees may act as reservoirs for these pathogens. See Wagstaff's pubs: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1220-4185>



MPS Alumnus Highlight: Aaron Ogden, Ph.D., Kahn Lab Alum, Patent Agent

Dr. Aaron Ogden graduated from the MPS program in 2018, having conducted research in the Kahn's Lab in the Institute of Biological Chemistry on plant-bacterial symbiosis and nitrogen fixation, combining classical wet-lab techniques with proteomics, metabolomics, and transcriptomics. This work was supported by an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, an NIH Protein Biotechnology Traineeship, the Loyal Davis Fellowship, the Natural Resource Conservation Endowment, and an internship in ThermoFisher's Biochemistry R&D group. After graduating, he completed a postdoc at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory on DARPA- and DOE-funded projects exploring plant-bacterial interactions. In 2022, Aaron pivoted to patent law, working as a patent agent at two large firms—first in Boston, MA, and now in Austin, TX—serving clients ranging from universities and startups to major pharmaceutical companies. Outside of work, Aaron is the proud father of a beautiful daughter, Abigail. See Ogden's pubs: <https://tinyurl.com/AOgdenGoogleScholar>