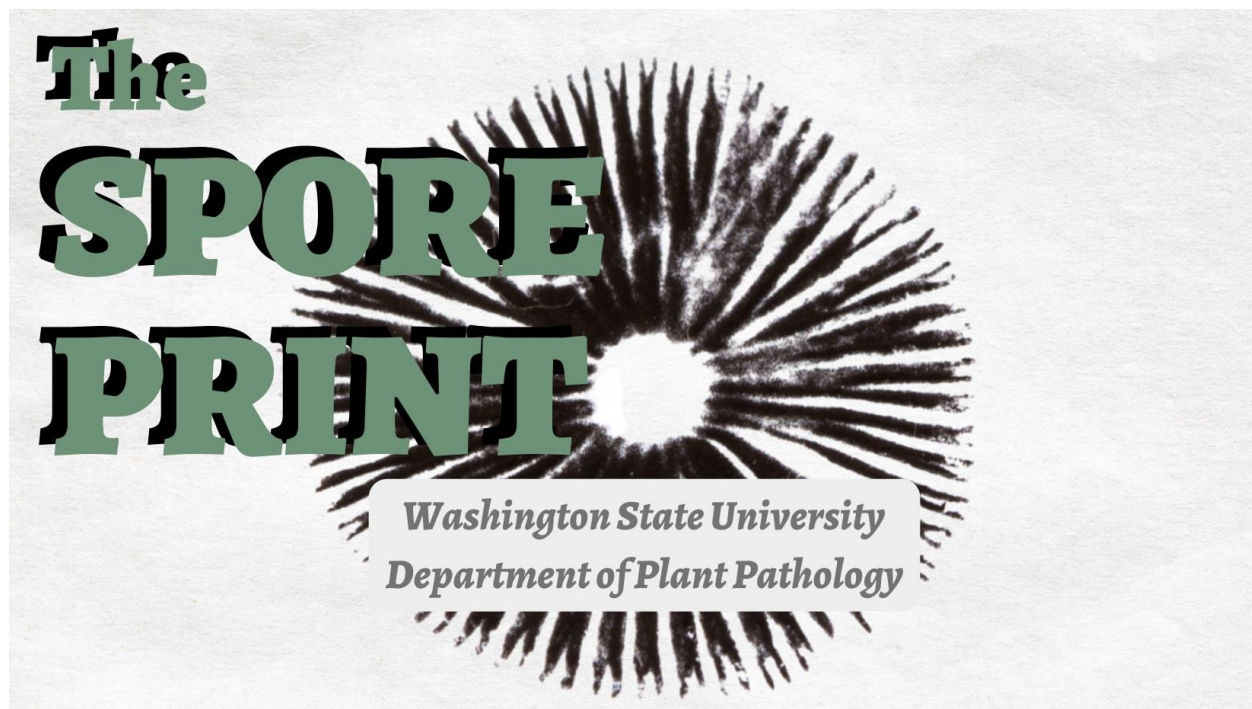




September 2026

The Spore Print (9/28/26): Department of Plant Pathology September 2026 Newsletter



Please enjoy these updates from our department for August 2026.

Francely representing the editorial team: Taylor, Anthony, Jeremy, Aalok, Abu, Sudeep, Monique, Jana, Cherryl, 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. You can also view the Sway version [here](#)

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



20th International Symposium on Microbial Ecology (ISME20)

Dr. Friesen sat on an invited panel at the ISME meeting in Auckland, NZ, in August 2026, discussing the regulation of microbial inoculants.



Departmental Travel Grant

Travel grants are available for **Department of Plant Pathology graduate students and postdoctoral research associates** presenting WSU research at scientific conferences held from **October 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027**. Applicants who received departmental travel funding in **Fall 2025 or Spring 2026** are not eligible.

Deadline: October 31, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

See the RFA for full eligibility and submission guidelines. Contact **Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli** with any questions.

Graduate Student Updates

Incoming Students

Maylin On is joining **Dr. Scott Harper's** Plant Virology lab as a Master's student. She received her B.S. in Botany and B.S. in Ecology from Cal Poly Humboldt in Northern California, focusing primarily on forest management and pathology. Her research will focus on little cherry disease caused by little cherry virus 1 and 2.

Welcome, Maylin!



1 - Maylin On

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 highlights

Graduate Student Travel Grant

Bipin Neupane received a Graduate Student Travel Grant of \$750, awarded by Science Societies (ASA/CSSA/SSSA), to attend CANVAS in Portland, OR, from November 1-4, 2026. He has also been selected as a **Top 100 Graduate Student** Leadership Conference Participant - 2026.

Bipin Neupane received a travel Grant worth \$750, awarded by the WSU Student Travel Gift Fund, to attend the Bayer B4U Summit in Chesterfield, MO, on October 2, 2026.

Dorothy L. Simpson ARCS Foundation Leadership Award

Mary Steele was selected as the 2026 WSU recipient of the Dorothy L. Simpson [ARCS](#) Foundation Leadership Award. The award recognizes exceptional leadership, intellectual curiosity, commitment to community, and dedication to the greater good.

The Award Selection Chair noted that the committee was truly impressed by **Mary's** dedication to mentorship and leadership. She received a cash award from the ARCS Foundation Seattle Chapter on September 17, 2026.

PPGSO Meetings – All Students Welcome!

Join the PPGSO meetings this fall to connect with other graduate students, hear updates, and get involved. **All students are welcome!**

Upcoming meetings: October 7 and 21 | 12:00–1:00 p.m.

Zoom information will be shared with students before each meeting.

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

We are 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: Cherryl



Position/Title: PhD in Plant Pathology

Advisor/PI: Dr. Youfu 'Frank' Zhao

Academic/Professional Background: B.S. in Agricultural Sciences (Hons.) from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, India, followed by an M.S. in Tropical Plant Pathology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Hometown: Ludhiana, Punjab, India

Hobbies: I enjoy reading books, listening to podcasts, having a good cup of coffee, and usually making scrambled eggs. I also love listening to Taylor Swift's music. I enjoy going on long walks, which help me disconnect from everyday life for a while, and reconnect with nature. One thing I

never miss is talking to my dad. I also love photography, especially capturing aesthetic moments and little details that catch my eye.

Pets: Surprisingly, and maybe a little weird. I'm not fond of animals or pets. Therefore, I never had one.

What made you interested in plant pathology/microbiology?

I am from Punjab, India, where farming is a big part of life. Growing up around agriculture sparked my interest in plants and the challenges farmers face. During my bachelor's in agriculture, I became fascinated by the disease symptoms I saw in the field and started wondering, "What is causing this, and how can we stop it?" That curiosity led me to plant pathology, where I found a perfect combination of microbiology, science, and protecting crops from yield and economic losses.

What is your favorite microbe/pathogen?

I don't really have just one favorite pathogen! I'm especially fascinated by the ***Pseudomonas syringae species complex*** because of its diversity and complexity, and there is still so much to discover about its different members, hosts, and disease-causing abilities. I'm also fascinated by bacterial pathogens like ***Dickeya*** and ***Pectobacterium***, particularly because of their ability to cause dramatic tissue decay.

What would you like to do after graduation?

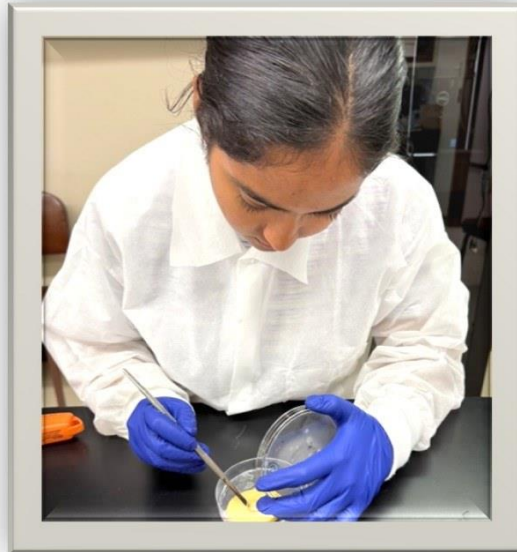
After graduation, I would like to continue building my career in plant pathology and pursue a path in academia. My long-term goal is to become a professor, where I can combine research and teaching, mentor students, and contribute to developing solutions for important plant disease challenges.



2 - This was my first passport-size photograph ever. it was taken on my very first day of school! Looking back at it makes me so nostalgic and proud of how far I've come. From starting the first day of school to now being on the journey toward a PhD it's amazing to see how much life has changed.



3 - Image from my First day beginning my master's degree at UH Manoa



4 - Me while working at Uh manoa

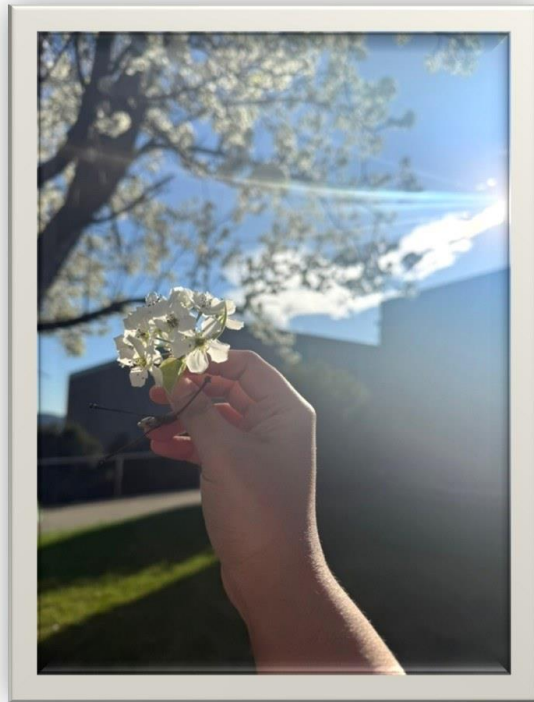


5 - Zhao Lab WSU, IAREC



6 - Image from IAREC, WSU. While working in the greenhouse





7 - I took these kinds of images. I usually like capturing nature.



8 - Me and my lab mate Harpreet

Community Corner

Fungal Foray

Save the date!

The annual **Fungal Foray** is planned for **October 11**. Participants will meet at **8:45 a.m. outside the French Administration Building along Wilson Road**.

Please plan to bring or arrange your own transportation, dress appropriately for walking in the woods, and bring water and snacks. **More information about the foray location will be shared soon.**

Friendsgiving Event

The **Community Corner** is planning a **Friendsgiving event in November**. Additional details will be shared soon.

Statewide Updates



Pullman Updates

CAHNRS Fall Festival 2026

PPGSO participated in the CAHNRS Fall Festival 2026 on September 10 at Spillman Plaza, sharing information about Plant Pathology with students across the college. Visitors had the opportunity to learn more about the department, its research, and graduate student activities. Thank you to **Anthony, Eduardo, Aalok, Cherryl, Maylin, and Tushar** for volunteering their time to help with setup, the booth, and cleanup.



9 - *Cherryl and Maylin at the CAHNRS Fall Festival 2026*



10 - **Eduardo** at the CAHNRS Fall Festival 2026



11 - **Aalok, Anthony and Eduardo** at the CAHNRS Fall Festival 2026



12 - Plant disease samples at the CAHNRS Fall Festival 2026.

ALL CAHNRS Science and Research Fair

Cherryl and Maylin represented the Department of Plant Pathology at the **ALL CAHNRS Science and Research Fair** on September 15 at the Lewis Alumni Center. Thank you to **Cherryl and Maylin** for volunteering and helping represent the department.



13 - Cheryl and Maylin represented the Department of Plant Pathology at the ALL CAHNRS Science and Research Fair

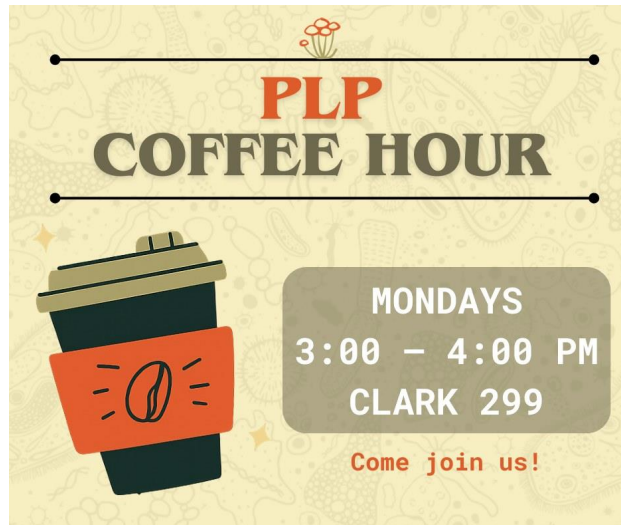
Weekly departmental coffee hour

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

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



14 - PLP coffee hour flyer. Photo: Francely Flores

Mount Vernon Updates

Graduate Student Position in Mount Vernon, WA

Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli is looking for a PhD student to work on a project focusing on Botrytis fruit rot management in blueberries. The prospective student will potentially start in Spring 2027 to work in the Berry and Potato Pathology program (<https://berry-potato-pathology.mtvernon.wsu.edu/>) located at Washington State University Mount Vernon Northwestern Washington Research and Extension center (<https://mtvernon.wsu.edu/>).

Please note that the prospective student will be working at a research center in Mount Vernon, WA, but not on the main campus in Pullman, WA.

Required qualifications:

- A master's degree in plant pathology or an appropriate related scientific discipline
- Knowledge of fundamental plant pathology principles, and experience applying those principles in field, laboratory, or greenhouse research experiments
- Effective communication (written and oral) and evidence of quality research publications in peer-reviewed journals (published or submitted)

Interested candidates should submit the following required documents: 1) a cover letter that describes your research interests, career goals, and how pursuing a PhD in the Berry and Potato Pathology lab will help you attain those goals; 2) a CV summarizing your work, academic, and

leadership experiences; 3) contact information of three professional references; and 4) an unofficial copy of your transcripts.

Combine all the above four documents into a single PDF file and email to Chakradhar Mattupalli (c.mattupalli@wsu.edu).

Herbarium Happenings: Shaw Mycological Herbarium



Marvelous Myxomycete Collection added to Shaw Herbarium

Many people have heard of Slime Molds (or Myxomycetes) due to their presence in recent years in popular science articles and entertainment media. Once classified with the fungi, they're now considered polyphyletic within the kingdom Protista, and only very distantly related to fungi.

In 2023 and 2024, the Shaw Herbarium (WSP) received part of an extensive private collection of macroscopic slime molds from Scott Stowell of Spokane. Scott, now a retired high school biology teacher, developed an early personal interest in these fascinating organisms.

While pursuing a Masters degree at UW, he collected many hundreds of them throughout the Washington Cascades and other nearby mountain ranges, following the retreating snow line up the mountains each spring and summer. Since his undergraduate degree was from WSU, Scott chose to donate portions of his collection to herbaria of both institutions.

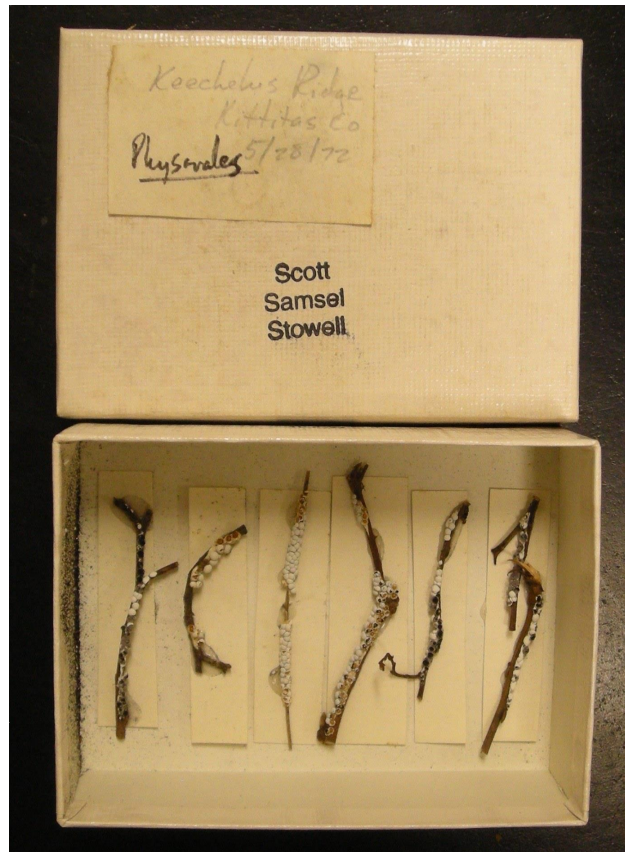
Earlier this year our Herbarium Assistant Megan Pyle spent several months accessioning 350 of these beautiful specimens into our permanent collection. Scott had identified, labeled and carefully mounted each specimen into a small box, providing a perfect example of the skill and expertise that citizen scientists can contribute to herbaria. We are very grateful for his kindness in donating this collection, which significantly increases the diversity of our myxomycete specimens!



15 - Scott Stowell of Spokane visiting the Shaw Herbarium in spring 2024 to donate part of his slime mold collection from the Washington Cascades



16 - Scott Stowell holding an example of one of his slime mold specimens, *Trichia verrucosa*, labeled and mounted in a box



17 - Physarales slime mold example on tiny twigs, boxed specimen from Scott Stowell



18 - Hemitrichia sp. slime mold on rotting wood, boxed specimen from Scott Stowell

Publications



Cowell, S., and **Harper, S.** 2026. Effect of nucleic acid extraction methodology and PCR chemistry on the detection of '*Candidatus Phytoplasma pruni*' in sweet cherry. Plant Dis. PDIS-05-26-0875-SC. <https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-05-26-0875-SC>

Joshi, P., Gao, Y. T., Dhillon, G. S., Kaur, A., Wheeler, J., **Chen, X. M.**, and Chen, J. L. 2026. Evaluation of greenhouse inoculation and scoring methods to assess common bunt resistance in wheat. Plant Dis. 110:3224:3233. <https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-12-24-2710-RE>

Sahin, B., **Wang, M. N.**, Zurn, J. D., Xu, X. T., Bai, H. B., Akhunova, A., **Chen, X. M.**, Akhunov, E. 2025. Genetic architecture and evolution of stripe rust resistance uncovered using diverse panels of wheat lines and *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. *tritici* isolates. Theor. Appl. Genet. 139:263. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00122-026-05363-x>

Chen, X. M., Wan, A. M., and **Wang, M. N.** 2026. Virulence characterization of the *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. *hordei* populations of 2010-2020 in the United States. Plant Dis. <https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-12-25-2562-RE>

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.

- **Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowship (NNF) Grants Program**

USDA NIFA is accepting applications for the NNF Grants Program to support graduate training in food and agricultural sciences. Applications are due October 15, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. ET. More information is available <https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/363559>

- **Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association Research Funding**

PNVA is accepting proposals for 2027 research addressing critical issues in the Pacific Northwest vegetable industry. Up to **\$20,000** is available. Proposals are due **October 30, 2026** and should be submitted to snolan@agmgt.com. More information is available [here](#).

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

Seminars



Dr. Mavrodi is leading the seminar series in Fall 2026. Seminars are scheduled every Monday from 4:10 to 5:00 p.m.

Thank you, **Dr. Mavrodi**, for providing the seminar schedule for the fall semester.

Plant Pathology Seminar Schedule – Fall 2026

Date	Speaker	Affiliation
08/24/26	Student Orientation (No seminar)	NA
08/31/26	Dr. David Weller	USDA-ARS / Washington State University
09/07/26	Labor Day (No seminar)	NA
09/14/26	Francely Flores	Washington State University
09/21/26	Anthony Deluca	Washington State University
09/28/26	Dr. Jane Stewart	Colorado State University
10/05/26	Dr. Leo De La Fuente	Auburn University
10/12/26	Dr. Kerik Cox (student invited speaker)	Cornell University
10/19/26	Taylor Mcnees	Washington State University
10/26/26	Abu Sina Tushar	Washington State University
11/02/26	Aalok Mishra	Washington State University
11/09/26	Fnu Cheryl	Washington State University
11/16/26	Dr. Janet Peters; Jordan Jobe; and Dr. Jan Dasgupta	Washington State University
11/23/26	Thanksgiving Break (No seminar)	NA
11/30/26	Dr. Olivia Landau	USDA-ARS / Washington State University
12/07/26	Dr. Kurtis Schroeder	University of Idaho

Jobs



Postdoctoral Positions

- **USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)** is offering a **Postdoctoral Research Opportunity in Plant Pathology** in Salinas, California, focused on the ecology, evolution, and management of soilborne pathogens including *Verticillium dahliae* and *Fusarium oxysporum* in strawberry and vegetable production. Applications are due **November 20, 2026**. More information is available [here](#).
- **USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)** is offering a **Postdoctoral Research Opportunity in Fungal Population Dynamics & Mycotoxin Ecology in Corn** in Peoria, Illinois. The project focuses on fungal ecology, microbiome sequencing, mycotoxin analysis, and computational modeling in corn production systems. Applications are due **June 4, 2027**. More information is available [here](#).

Technician, Industry, and Other Non-Academic Positions

- **Bayer** is hiring a **Plant Health Co-Op** to support plant pathology research through pathogen characterization, molecular methods, bioinformatics, data analysis, and

research workflow optimization. Applicants should be currently enrolled in an M.S. or Ph.D. program, preferably in Plant Pathology. The posting will remain open until at least **March 19, 2027**. More information is available [here](#).

Faculty Positions

- **The University of Georgia** is hiring **three open-rank tenure-track faculty positions in Crop Design**. Applications received by **October 1, 2026**, will receive full consideration. More information is available [here](#).
- **The University of Kentucky** is hiring a tenure-track **Assistant Extension Professor of Plant Pathology** focused on specialty crop disease management. Applications should be submitted by **October 9, 2026**, for full consideration. More information is available [here](#).
- **Wageningen University & Research** is hiring **two Associate Professors in Novel Concepts in Plant-Pathogen Interactions** in the Laboratory of Phytopathology. The positions focus on areas such as disease resilience, pathogen adaptation, predictive modelling, quantitative disease immunity, and structural biology. Applications are due **October 10, 2026**. More information is available [here](#).
- **The University of Massachusetts Amherst** is hiring an **Assistant Professor in Plant Health & Plant-Microbe Interactions**. Application review begins **October 11, 2026**, and continues until the position is filled. More information is available [here](#).
- **Université de Montréal** is hiring an **Assistant Professor of Evolution of Fungal Diversity** in the Department of Biological Sciences. The position focuses on fungal biodiversity, systematics, phylogenetics, phylogenomics, evolution, and research using fungal collections. Applications are due **October 25, 2026**. More information is available [here](#).
- **Université de Montréal** is hiring an **Assistant Professor of Plant Molecular Genetics** in the Department of Biological Sciences. The position will focus on developing an independent research program in plant molecular genetics, teaching, and graduate student supervision. Applications are due **October 25, 2026**. More information is available [here](#).
- **Iowa State University** is hiring a tenure-track **Assistant Professor in Seed Pathology** in the Department of Plant Pathology, Entomology and Microbiology and the Seed Science Center. The position focuses on seedborne pathogen diagnostics, including viruses, bacteria, and fungi, with particular interest in high-throughput sequencing and bioinformatics. **Applications should be submitted by January 4, 2027**. More information is available [here](#).

Explore and Learn!



Spooky Plant Pathogens: Creepy Cases from the Garden

Join Drs. Jen Rushton and Emily Luna, from Colorado State University, for a **Halloween-themed** dive into the world of plant diseases. We'll explore fungi that **resemble monsters**, **bacteria that ooze like slime**, and **other chilling plant pathology phenomena**. Perfect for anyone who loves plants—and a **good scare**!

October 14, 2026 | 12:00–1:00 p.m.

Register here: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jj8qfm8FQXyWpyKrar_SAQ#/registration

Plant Doctor Quiz - Potato pathogens and pests

Ready for another test?

Test your plant diagnostic skills with **BSPP Plant Doctor Quiz #36**, focused on pathogens and pests affecting potato production.

Take the quiz here: <https://www.bspp.org.uk/bspp-plant-doctor-quiz-36-march-2024/>

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.

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