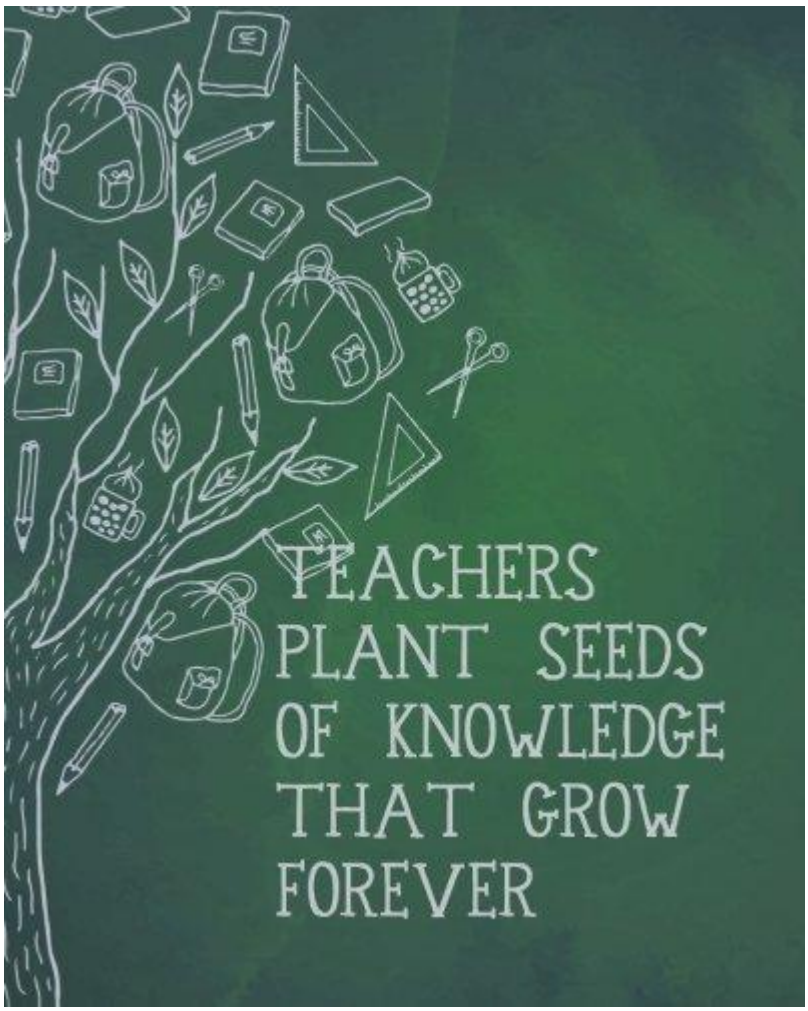
Phytogen April 2019

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24 April 2019





Here is a report from 2018 ASPS teaching award recipient – Beth Loveys

During my PhD and then subsequent post-doctoral research positions I had not really considered the possibility of becoming a teaching only academic, mainly because I was not aware such positions existed! I always assumed I would continue doing research with some teaching when necessary. Three children and several moves chasing short term research

contracts made me think more broadly about what a future career in science might look like for me. I had always enjoyed teaching, even as demonstrator during my PhD, and coming across an advert for a teaching only academic at the University of Adelaide got me thinking.



Beth receiving her award from ASPS president Professor Sergey Shabala

After being appointed in the teaching only position I quickly learnt that being an effective teacher in large classes was not an easy task. I quickly realised the best resources available to me where not only my colleagues but also the students themselves. There is no better way to trouble-shoot problematic courses or topics than to ask the students where they are getting stuck. Over the first 5 years of my teaching only position I immersed myself in teaching pedagogy literature to begin understanding the best ways to support students in their learning. This knowledge allowed me to develop learning resources to help students grasp complex topics in plant science and biochemistry. The scientist in me wanted data to support the decisions I was making about teaching methodologies and resources, this meant I had to learn how to deal with qualitative data and the moving target of different cohorts of students each year. These data have allowed me to reflect in an objective way about what works and what doesn't work and where the biggest gains in student comprehension can be made. Over the last two years I have become increasingly interested in working with students as partners in developing curriculum.



Beth working the lab with her Foundations in Plant Science students

It was a real honour to be awarded the ASPS Teaching Award in 2018, recognition from science peers is both humbling and pleasing. Since receiving the award I undertook a project to build video resources for supporting a mixed cohort of undergraduate, postgraduate, domestic and international students in mastering practical winemaking and laboratory skills. Senior students demonstrated, scripted and recorded voice over narration for all videos. Two of the senior students involved with the project were international students so were able to translate all scripts into Cantonese as additional support for the growing cohort from China. The input of the senior students was invaluable to create videos that were appropriate for the incoming cohort. An example of one of the videos can be seen here:

https://youtu.be/iZO1Z2cWtGo

As the student population becomes increasingly diverse, culturally and demographically, having resources that support independent learning outside of prescribed class time is essential. For these resources to be of maximum benefit they must be well designed with embedded feedback so that students are able to gain confidence outside of class and thus be better prepared for their time with the teacher in class.

There is a website with education conferences, Aussie Educator that covers all ages from junior to academia, STEM, national and international. On the site are two international education conferences coming up in Adelaide this year. The conferences cover all discipline areas in tertiary education. One focuses on the emerging pedagogy of Students as Partners and the other focuses on the teaching-research nexus. Registration is discounted if you attend both conferences! Click on the pictures below to expand.



To finish off for this month:

Hope you have registered for our ASPS meeting in Melbourne this year and students please apply for travel support by Friday June 14.

Next month: Reports from student travel awards 2018 and it would be nice to promote a Plants event near you for International Fascination of Plants Day on Sunday May 19. There isn't an event registered for Australia yet..... see how you go.

Tweets by PlantDay18May