January 2025 Phytogen

30 January 2025

Welcome to the first edition of Phytogen for 2025!

For this first edition of 2025 we are keeping things short and sweet – highlighting some of the new ASPS Student reps, and reports from the 2024 Conference.

We **welcome contributions** from students and researcher at any time for publication in Phytogen and on our social media sites. Its free and a great way to give your research profile a boost and share your findings! Send your contribution to our editors Raz (razlin.azman@csiro.au) or Lucas (L.Auroux@latrobe.edu.au).

The new ASPS website is currently underway, and **we need your contribution**! Send us your plant science-related research photos to be featured on the new website. For copyright reasons, please do not send any images that have been published or that you are planning to publish. Images for consideration for the new website can be sent to Phytogen editors or Janet Wheeler.

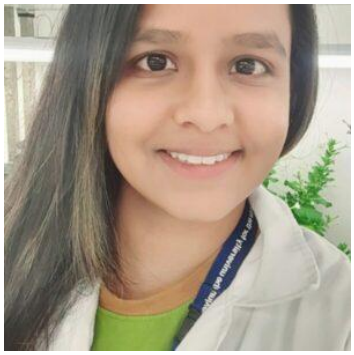
2025 ASPS Student reps

**Alexandra Cunninghamn (SA)**

PhD student, Flinders University, Adelaide

alexandra.cunningham@flinders.edu.au

I am a first-year PhD student at Flinders University studying heat and drought tolerance in wheat, focusing on plant-soil-microbial interactions, stress biomarkers, and rhizosphere dynamics. In my spare time, I enjoy gardening and reading anything not from a peer-reviewed journal. I am looking forward to working with other student representatives and ASPS members throughout 2025!



Chamika Ratnayake (Queensland)

PhD student, Queensland University of Technology

chamilka.ratnayake@hdr.qut.edu.au

Chamilka Ratnayake is a PhD student at the Queensland University of Technology in the lab of Prof. Peter Waterhouse. Working with *Nicotiana benthamiana* – Australia's native 'lab rat' plant – she's pioneering research in metabolic pathway engineering. Beyond her research, Chamilka spearheads science communication, making complex plant biology accessible to everyone and inspiring the next generation of plant scientists.



Lucas Auroux (VIC)

PhD student, La Trobe university

l.auroux@latrobe.edu.au

Lucas Auroux is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University. He investigates plant (epi)genomics, focusing on genome regulation during seed germination at single-cell resolution. Using advanced transcriptomics and spatial biology, his work aims to provide genetic tools to breeders to optimise germination in crops, addressing challenges in agriculture, climate change, and food security.

Winners' Reports from 2024 ASPS Conference

NSW & ACT

Best Student Presentation

Nicole Bison, University of British Columbia (visiting the Australian National University)

Academic profile | The University of British Columbia interview | X: @Nicole Bison

I am a PhD student in Sean Michaletz' lab at The University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. I'm here visiting ANU in Adrienne Nicotra's lab for a term and was so glad ASPS was holding their annual meeting during my visit. For me, this conference really had it all! The presenters were researchers whose work I've admired for years, and the atmosphere at the conference was fun and welcoming. I enjoyed sharing some new work and had some great discussion and feedback. Everything you could ask for! Thanks for having me ASPS!

Student Presentation Runner-up

Xuan Hu, Australian National University

Academic profile

I am Xuan Hu, a fourth-year PhD student at Australian National University in Prof. Owen Atkin's group, and I am honored to have received the Runner-Up Award for Best Student Presentation at the 2024 ASPS conference. The event provided a fantastic platform to share my research and connect with researchers across various disciplines in plant science. Engaging with experts and peers was inspiring and offered valuable feedback on my work. It was a pleasure to meet and exchange ideas with others passionate about advancing plant science. I am grateful to ASPS for this opportunity and look forward to future conferences.

Best Student Poster

Edward Chaplin, University of Sydney

The University of Sydney interview

Attending the ASPS Conference in Sydney in November 2024 was a great experience, allowing me to network with fellow scientists and researchers from my discipline. The conference gave me an opportunity to hear about cutting-edge plant science being undertaken at other organisations as well as to present my own research which forms part of my PhD studies at the University of Sydney. My poster, for which I won the poster award, showcased the novel method I have developed to enable high-throughput phenotyping of stomatal physiology and anatomy traits under field conditions. I look forward to attending future ASPS events

VICTORIA

Best ECR Presentation

Lim Chee Liew, LaTrobe University

Lim Chee Liew Profile | La Trobe University

X: @LimCheeLiew

I recently had the privilege of attending 2024 ASPS conference, where I presented my research on seed germination. It was an incredible experience to engage with leading experts and peers, exchange ideas, and receive valuable feedback on my work. A highlight of the conference was being honoured with the Early Career Researcher (ECR) Presenter Award, recognizing my presentation and contribution to the field. This recognition motivates me to continue pursuing innovative research and collaboration. The event reinforced the importance of networking and staying abreast of cutting-edge developments, and I look forward to applying these insights to my future endeavours.

Best Student Presentation

Olivia Doolan, LaTrobe University

Olivia Doolan | La Trobe University Profile

ASPS24 was a hybrid conference with multiple hubs across Australia and New Zealand. I attended the Melbourne/Victoria hub, hosted by La Trobe University. The conference featured a diverse array of excellent talks, ranging from the potential use of tomatoes for pharmaceutical synthesis in space to the development of a single-cell resolution transcriptome atlas of germinating Arabidopsis. In the afternoon, ASPS awardees delivered insightful overviews of their careers and research areas. The day was filled with captivating talks, engaging posters, and valuable networking opportunities. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to present my work at such an excellent conference

Best Poster

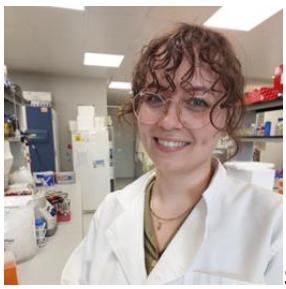
Thomas Cobbinah, La Trobe University

LinkedIn

The presenters were from various fields of plant sciences with different academic levels from Principal Investigators through Early Career Researchers (ECR) to PhD and Master students. While enjoying the lunch well-crafted posters full of scientific information were staring at us, so we had to go around to enjoy what they had for us. Afterwards, the online and node award sessions followed where Dr Lim Chee Liew and I from Prof. Lewsey's group won the Best Early Career Researcher and the Best Poster awards. At 5:00 pm, the meeting ended, and the organizers arranged for us to go to Bang Pop in South Wharf for the conference dinner. Enjoying a series of scientific discoveries and networking with people from various fields of science made the 2024 ASPS conference one of the unforgettable moments and to crown it with an award made me overwhelmed with joy.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

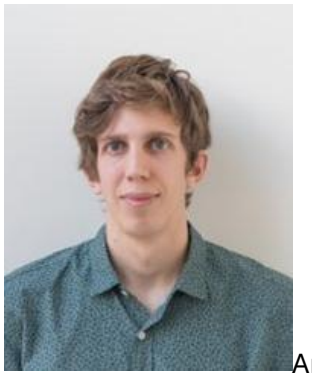
Best Presentation

Samantha Norman, University of Western Australia

LinkedIn

I have always enjoyed the ASPS conferences, and the 2024 hybrid conference was no exception. I really enjoyed the in person talks at my local WA node. There was great range of research topics presented, and everyone was very engaged resulting in some great discussions. I was lucky enough to be chosen to give a talk at the conference myself (my first ever conference presentation) and it was a joy to share my research with a room full of plant people. I am already looking forward to the next ASPS conference!

Best Poster

Andrew Tuckey, University of Western Australia

X: @andy_tuckey

Attending my third ASPS meeting at UWA last November was a rewarding experience. The journey – a mere two flights of stairs – was a breeze compared to the intellectual heights we scaled during the conference. The program struck a great balance between insightful talks and engaging posters, and preparing a 3-minute flash talk was an enjoyable challenge. The conference dinner was a treat, with the melodic calls of frogs in the Sunken Garden adding a charming touch to the evening's ambiance, alongside delicious food and great company. I'm looking forward to the next opportunity to reconnect with this community.

Editors' note

We hope your year is off to a good start. Phytogen will be back in February. Remember to send us your research images for an opportunity to be featured on the new ASPS Website.

Phosynthetically,
Raz & Lucas

Newsletter written and edited by Lucas Auroux and Razlin Azman.

We thank the Student representatives and ASPS conference winners for their contribution to this edition of Phytogen