

coming to hear the lectures, but this seems to be a misguided fear. If a research presentation seems interesting, people will come to hear it regardless of the language in which it is presented. Also, it is important to note that this trend has been voluntarily initiated by young researchers. As this generation emerges on the scene, the tide is going to shift naturally. Also, as more foreign researchers participate, everyone is going to be

able to enjoy discussions where arguments are made from diverse perspectives. The International Committee will continue to support these kinds of activities in the future.

Ken Shirasu
International Committee Chairperson

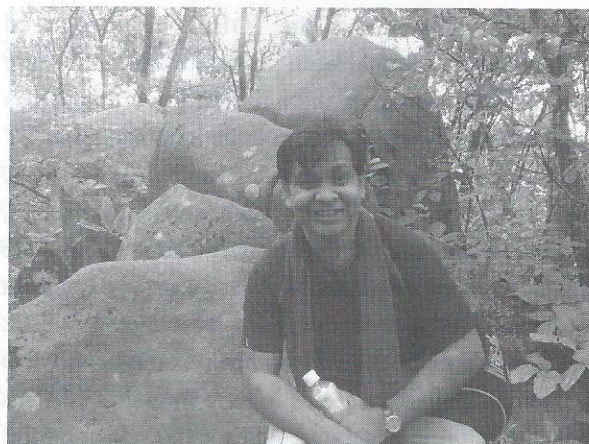
Letter from a Foreign PI in Japan

I am extremely honored to be the first contributor of this section. I was born in Bangladesh, and graduated from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Dhaka University in 1995, majoring in Biochemistry. In 1997, I enrolled as a Ph.D student (supported by MEXT) in the Graduate School of Science and Technology, Kobe University under the supervision of Dr. Seiji Tsurumi. I was awarded Ph.D in 2001 in Plant Biology. After completion of my Ph.D, I had a short post doc with Dr. Yutaka Ono of Japan Atomic Energy Agency, Takasaki, Gunma; as a JSPS postdoctoral fellow. In 2003, I left Japan for USA and joined the lab of Dr. Tobias Baskin as a Senior Postdoctoral fellow. I joined Iwate University at the end of 2006 as an Assistant Professor and was promoted to Associate Professor in the summer of 2010. My research interest lies in understanding the hormonal regulation of plant growth and development under optimum condition and various stresses. For this, we are primarily focusing on the plant hormone auxin, which influences plant behavior from embryogenesis to senescence and exhibits complex interactions with other hormones.

From a general perspective, it is challenging to run a lab as a foreign PI in Japan. There are several issues that make this whole process difficult. One of the major issues is grant applications. Although it is getting better and MEXT did a wonderful job in making the grant submission process in English, there are still lots of barriers during submissions, providing midterm and final reports. Like MEXT, JSPS should step forward to provide all the applications in both Japanese and English. Another issue is grant application review. The review that we receive against our proposal rarely helps in making the proposal better for next round as there

are no specific indications of weak or strong points of the proposal and what needs to be improved. MEXT/JSPS should think about adopting the format of NSF/NIH/ISF. The lack of infrastructure in supporting the non-Japanese speaking faculties and their families is a big issue too. The respective universities should think about providing support to the foreign faculties, which is almost minimal everywhere in Japan.

Because of my long association with Japan, I have less difficulty in running the lab as I can communicate in Japanese and read. I do enjoy working at Iwate University. The most enjoyable thing is to teach the scientific courses in English to the students. These students have strong interest in learning and that gives me a great hope about the possibility of making them competent and competitive at global level. I enjoy the discipline among the students and colleagues; also enjoy the company of some wonderful colleagues around here. I like the culture and the food of Japan. Although occasionally I encounter some difficulties, in general I love my work place.



I am very much excited to see JSPP thinking globally. I was contacted before regarding this issue and gave my opinion. I am glad that some of my suggestions were adopted. I believe JSPP can be a globally leading society for plant biologists and it is the right time to start this process. JSPP should think about selecting corresponding members in different countries and plan to make "Joint Meeting" with plant biology society of China, Korea, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand in every 3 or 4 years. JSPP has done a wonderful job in relaunching the English web site. Next step should be

to make the on-line membership application and credit card payment system in English. We are in an exciting era of global exchange and formation of a true global academic society would further facilitate it. I believe JSPP is heading in the right direction under the current leadership. As a long time member, I would be more than happy to assist JSPP to pass through this transition successfully.

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Report on Fascination of Plants Day (FoPD)

The International Fascination of Plants Day (FoPD), which was launched last year, came up on its second year. I do not describe the details on the developments leading up to the start of this campaign, but on September 3, 2012, the FoPD Investigation Committee convened at Osaka Prefecture University, reported on its activities, and discussed potential directions for the future. Participating from outside the JSPP were Derek Goto (Hokkaido University), Masao Watanabe (Tohoku University), Machiko Ito (RIKEN), Yutaka Takeda, and Takao Fujiyoshi (Nagoya University). The conclusions of the investigation committee are as follows.

[Purpose of Activities]

- To share the importance of plants and the fascination of plant physiology with as many people as possible.
- To provide opportunities and model cases to researchers who have an interest in outreach activities, but are wondering how to start.
- To broaden and deepen partnerships with various event organizers.

[Period]

Internationally, FoPD was held on May 18, 2013. In Japan, events were held for about one month around that date. Pre-events and post-events are planned for those who wish to participate in events before and after that period.

[Management]

- There is a loose management structure under a coordinator team.
- The names and head shots of the coordinators will

be publicized.

- Events can be registered on our website, and will be listed as official events once approved by the coordinator team.

After the meeting of the investigation committee, Goto created a website for the coordinator team. The website is linked to the Japanese FoPD page (<http://www.plantday12.eu/japan.htm>).

When the FoPD was implemented in 2012, we were uncertain what the situation would look like in 2013, but ultimately the event expanded on an international scale. As of the end of March, 50 countries had been confirmed as participants (39 countries last year). Stories from various participating countries can be seen on the FoPD website (<http://www.plantday12.eu/home.htm>). Within Japan, there were many more participants this year than last. As of the end of March, eight events, including research facility open houses, 35 hands-on events or talks, one web campaign by a publishing company, and 20 school-related events (partner activities between universities and elementary, junior high, or high schools) were planned. Last year's flier was printed front and back on an A4-sized sheet



Fascination of
Plants Day

May 18th 2013

International Fascination of Plants Day (FoPD) logo