

EDITORIAL

Inaugural editorial

Horticulture Research (2014) 1, 5; doi:10.1038/hortres.2014.5;
published online 22 January 2014

Horticulture is one of the oldest agricultural practices, dating back to the beginning of human civilization when humans collected naturally grown fruits, brought them to their settlements and purposely cultivated them. Horticulture today plays crucial roles in our lives. Fruits, nuts and vegetables are important foods that supplement staples like rice and corn and provide many essential nutrients. Ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers are essential for beautifying our living places. Fresh-cut flowers are associated with public congratulatory events like business openings and personal celebratory occasions like weddings, anniversaries and holidays. Teas, herbs and specialty local fruits are inseparable parts of cultures and religious traditions. Increasingly, horticulture is being used in combatting nutritional imbalance, obesity and mental health issues, providing educational materials for teaching biological sciences, remediating environmental disorders, and conserving biodiversity and environmental integrity.

Horticulture as a research subfield of agriculture and plant biology began thousands of years ago when our ancestors intentionally propagated selected fruit trees by cuttings and grafting, or by planting seeds from selected fruits and vegetables. Horticultural research today shares many aspects with agronomic crop research and general botany since it follows the same biological principles and uses the same experimental tools. Horticultural research often has the same goals as other agronomic plant research, such as breeding crops for greater yield and higher quality in terms of longer shelf life and richer nutrients, and understanding the fundamental processes of plant life such as development, reproduction, adaptation to diverse environments and resistance to diseases, insects and abiotic stresses. On the other hand, because horticultural crops, frequently considered 'minor' or specialty crops, are very diverse and possess many unique characteristics not found in agronomic crops, horticultural research has not always been fully appreciated or understood by other research communities.

For decades, basic research in horticulture has been considered to lag behind that in general plant biology and agronomy. This remains true in many areas due to certain unique hurdles, such as long life cycles, large plant sizes and lack of genetic database resources. However, the field of basic horticultural research has undergone a remarkable transformation in the last 30 years, attributable to revolutionary technologies like genetic engineering and genome sequencing. Never before has basic research in horticulture been more exciting in terms of revealing the mechanisms underlining the 'beauty' and function of dazzling varieties of horticulture crops. The rapid progress and mushrooming of novel discoveries call for a dedicated journal for communicating these exciting findings within basic horticultural research community.

Launching *Horticulture Research*, a new journal for such a community, became possible through a shared long-term vision of Nanjing Agricultural University, which has set the lofty goal to become one of the premier global research universities with a focus on agriculture and life sciences, and Nature Publishing Group (NPG), which wishes to expand excellence in science publishing to new territories like horticulture. I have the great honor to be appointed

as the founding Editor-in-Chief (EIC). Associated with this role, I have accepted the challenges and responsibilities of developing the journal into a premier professional journal in horticulture and plant biology.

The vision for *Horticulture Research* is for a vigorously peer-reviewed, open-access, online journal with the mission of publishing the most interesting and impactful research discoveries in basic and fundamental areas for all horticultural crops worldwide. The Journal will publish original research articles, reviews of recent developments in specific subject areas and forward-looking perspectives. Subject areas include, but are not limited to, genetics, genomics and breeding, biotechnology, biochemistry, physiology, cellular and molecular biology, evolution and environmental biology of horticultural plants. The Journal will also accept contributions that present innovative and improved methods, or resources that advance basic horticultural research with broad interests. The Journal will also publish News and Views on current events and hot topics in global horticultural fields. *Horticulture Research* embraces new and emerging trends quickly by periodically publishing special issues.

There are numerous benefits to publishing in *Horticulture Research*. The Journal will strive to complete the initial review process in 6–8 weeks. Each manuscript will be published as online-first shortly after acceptance. All accepted manuscripts will be edited professionally by the NPG staff for language and consistency of format before formal publication to ensure high quality. In addition, a short, 100- to 150-word summary will be produced by the NPG staff and published under a Creative Commons license. NPG's excellence in science publishing ensures that all research published in *Horticulture Research* will receive the highest exposure to both professionals and popular press through online hosting on <http://www.nature.com>.

Finally, it is my great honor to work with an exceptional team of Associate Editors (AEs) who will unselfishly devote their time and expertise to *Horticulture Research*. I will rely heavily on them not only in handling manuscripts and making a sound recommendation on each manuscript, but also in working with me to develop this new journal to best serve the basic horticultural research community. All AEs also hold the privilege to propose and organize timely special issues in their subfields. As basic horticultural research continues to evolve, I will recruit additional AEs and adjust the expertise in the editorial board.

I wish to close this inaugural editorial by inviting horticulturalists and plant biologists who are engaged in basic research of horticultural crops to submit your exciting research discoveries to *Horticulture Research*, and by thanking you in advance for your support as editors, authors, reviewers and information users. A community journal should fulfill community needs, and in turn, it needs community care and community support. I will welcome and value greatly your suggestions and ideas for making the journal highly impactful. With your support, together we can build a journal of excellence to serve the horticultural research community, and agricultural and biological sciences in general, with the ultimate outcome of improving our lives, for many years to come.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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