

HIGHLIGHTS

WEB WATCH

Maize genetics and genomics database

• <http://www.maizegdb.org>

MaizeGDB is undoubtedly the 'must-bookmark' one-stop shop for anyone with an interest in maize genetics.

The user-friendly web interface makes it easy to navigate through the large array of tools and resources. You can search through compilations of BACs, ESTs, probes, QTLs, phenotypes, references and so on — almost any data set you can think of that is related to maize genetics. All of these resources are provided with a layman's summary of what they are.

Tools that can be sourced through MaizeGDB include the genome browser, which provides a slick means of accessing BACs, ESTs, microsatellites and sequences from any given region of the 10 maize chromosomes, as well as a maize-specific BLAST search engine. Educational resources that are relevant to maize are also collated on the site. These resources provide some nice basic background information on maize in general, and maize genetics in particular.

It is some of the added extras on the site that show that the MaizeGDB team have gone the extra mile in an attempt to achieve their stated aim of presenting maize genetic resources "in a way that creates intuitive biological connections for the researcher with minimal effort". Examples include the online tutorial and the downloadable PowerPoint presentation for introducing new users to the database. They have also flagged their intent to make the site as responsive as possible to the community it serves through a short but pithy survey, which they encourage users to fill in, together with jobs and meetings notice boards.

Finally, if the site itself is not enough to satisfy a 'maizeophile's' thirst for information, you can also sign up for regular e-mail newsletters.

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