

## HIGHLIGHT ADVISORS

### MICHAEL AKAM

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,  
UK

### SEAN B. CARROLL

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN,  
USA

### NANCY J. COX

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, USA

### SUSAN FORSBURG

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA, USA

### RALPH J. GREENSPAN

THE NEUROSCIENCES  
INSTITUTE, CALIFORNIA, USA

### YOSHIHIDE HAYASHIZAKI

RIKEN GENOMIC SCIENCES  
CENTER, JAPAN

### MARK JOBLING

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER, UK

### PETER KOOPMAN

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND,  
AUSTRALIA

### LEONID KRUGLYAK

FRED HUTCHINSON CANCER  
RESEARCH CENTER, USA

### BARBARA MEYER

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
BERKELEY, USA

### JOHN QUAKENBUSH

THE INSTITUTE FOR GENOMIC  
RESEARCH, USA

### JANET ROSSANT

MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL,  
TORONTO, CANADA

### MARC VIDAL

DANA-FARBER CANCER  
INSTITUTE, BOSTON, USA

### VIRGINIA WALBOT

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, USA

### DETLEF WEIGEL

MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR  
DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY,  
GERMANY

### PHIL ZAMORE

UNIVERSITY OF  
MASSACHUSETTS, USA

### LEONARD I. ZON

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL,  
BOSTON, USA

## PLANT DEVELOPMENT

# A time and a place for flowers

For reproductive success, all the plants of any one species need to ensure that they flower at the same time. New research sheds light on the mechanisms that control this process. It shows how the temporal signal that is a response to the correct time for flowering is interpreted spatially to position flower development at the shoot apex.

In *Arabidopsis thaliana* the time of year is sensed through the accumulation of the nuclear protein CONSTANS (CO) in the leaf when daylight hours are long. *FLOWERING LOCUS T* (*FT*) is the primary target of CO in the leaf, but this signal somehow needs to reach the site of flower development. Huang *et al.* show that the mRNA of *FT* is transported through the phloem to the shoot apex, where it is translated into protein.

How does FT then trigger the pathways that lead to flower development? And how is it localized to the shoot apex? Using independent approaches, Abe *et al.* and Wigge *et al.* identified the bZIP (basic region leucine zipper) transcription factor, FD, as the partner of FT in the induction of flower development. Whereas FD is expressed constitutively in the shoot apex, the non-localized *FT* transcripts are only expressed when daylight hours indicate the correct time for flowering. Therefore, the interaction between the two proteins represents the integration of the spatial and temporal signals for flower development.



Abe *et al.* provide evidence for the presence of FT and FD in the nucleus, and on the basis of genetic and biochemical evidence both groups suggest that the proteins form a transcriptional complex. Wigge *et al.* show that the floral meristem identity gene, *APETALA 1* (*API*), a crucial early factor in flower development, is a direct target of this complex.

The combined data nicely demonstrates how the temporal signal, which is generated in the leaves, is combined with the spatial one. However many questions remain, such as how the response is fine-tuned so that the expression of *API*

is restricted to part of the shoot apex, whereas *FD* is expressed in most of it. And whether this mechanism is conserved in other plants.

Patrick Goymer

## References and links ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPERS

Huang, T. *et al.* The mRNA of the *Arabidopsis* gene *FT* moves from leaf to shoot apex and induces flowering. *Science* 11 August 2005 (doi:10.1126/science.1117768) | Abe, M. *et al.* FD, a bZIP protein mediating signals from the floral pathway integrator FT at the shoot apex. *Science* **309**, 1052–1056 (2005) | Wigge, P. A. *et al.* Integration of spatial and temporal information during floral induction in *Arabidopsis*. *Science* **309**, 1056–1059 (2005)

**FURTHER READING** Krizek, B. A. & Fletcher, J. C. Molecular mechanisms of flower development: an armchair guide. *Nature Rev. Genet.* **6**, 688–698 (2005)