

## Community engagement



**John Donne famously said that nobody “is an island entire of itself”. This month sees the opening-up of a new ‘continent’ for plant scientists.**

**T**he scientific endeavour is not a zero-sum game. More is achieved more quickly by a group of researchers collaborating than by the same collection of individuals working alone. Duplications of efforts are avoided, errors are spotted and complementary skills are exploited to compensate for the weaknesses of individual members of the team. This is clearly manifested in the number of authors on scientific manuscripts. Single-author research papers, especially in an experimental discipline such as plant biology, are practically extinct; in fact we can’t find a single example in *Nature Plants*. Even two- and three-author papers, or papers with contributions from only a single lab are rare. One paper in this issue has 232 authors.

Given such levels of collaboration, we were pleased last month by the launch of the [Springer Nature Plant Science Community](#) site. The aim of the Plant Science Community is to provide a forum for sharing research, news and opinions with others interested in plant research. It has a straightforward format within which written, image and video content can be posted by anyone who has something to share with the wider research community.

This isn’t the first Springer Nature Research Community; in fact some topics have been covered for a number of years. You may well have noticed that on the *Nature Plants* home page, there have often been Announcements linking to posts about plant research papers primarily in the [Springer Nature Ecology and Evolution Community](#), or more occasionally the [Springer Nature Microbiology Community](#). From now on you can expect much more of these to lead to the Springer Nature Plant Science Community page.

Although we open the site to all kinds of content broadly relating to plant research, most posts fall into one of four categories, of which the most common is ‘Behind the Paper’ (see for



example, ref. 1). ‘Behind the Paper’ pieces give authors of published research the opportunity to talk about how their work came to be. Here you will find talk of the serendipitous findings that started the researchers down an unexpected path, and of the trials they faced along the way. There is room also for speculation about the broader meaning of the research and what might come next. ‘Behind the Paper’ pieces are of course linked back to the research papers themselves.

There are also ‘News and Opinion’ posts. If this sounds suspiciously like the ‘News & Views’ that are a feature of Nature journals, it is hardly a coincidence as they serve a very similar function. In ‘News and Opinion’, researchers report on and discuss recent research in which they were not involved (for example, ref. 2). ‘From the Editors’ posts have a similar role but are written by editors from within Springer Nature. There is currently a piece by our colleague, Inês Trindade, talking about the collection of papers that we have put together to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Barbara McClintock’s Nobel Prize<sup>3</sup>.

Finally, there are the ‘On the Road’ posts, which talk about things that scientists and editors have discovered during their travels. These might be meeting reports, perhaps the description of a museum or botanical gardens, or maybe anecdotes from field work or even a holiday. The only real stipulation is that they should relate to getting away from the lab bench and computer and into the ‘real’ world, something Camille Suzanne Delavaux praises in this entry to the genre<sup>4</sup>.

Of course, the Springer Nature Plant Science Community is not restricted to content related to *Nature Plants* alone. Plant research is published in a diverse range of journals within Springer Nature and is handled by a group of editors of which the *Nature Plants* team is only a small part. The members convene each month to talk about what has been going on in our particular corners of plant science. Papers that are actively under consideration at any of our journals are not discussed, but we do share knowledge, ideas and even the odd item of gossip. Most of this group will be contributing to the Springer Nature Plant Science Community over the coming months.

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### References

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