

Geofe O. Cadiz – winner of the 2020 Australian Journal of Botany student prize

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Australian Journal of Botany has a long and proud tradition of supporting the next generation of plant scientists. In recent years, one of the ways we have done this is to award an annual prize for the best student paper. It is my pleasure to announce that the prize for best student paper for 2020 was won by Ms Geofe O. Cadiz of The University of Melbourne, and the University of the Philippines Cebu, for her paper ‘Environmental factors associated with the abundance of forest wiregrass (*Tetrarrhena juncea*), a flammable understorey grass in productive forests’, co-authored with her University of Melbourne colleagues Dr Jane Cawson, Dr Trent Penman, Dr Alan York and Dr Thomas Duff (Cadiz *et al.* 2020).

Tetrarrhena juncea (forest wiregrass) is widely distributed in the understorey of mesic forests of South East Australia, a bioregion that is subject to recurrent fire. The study examined the factors that determine the abundance of *Tetrarrhena juncea*, in particular temperature, light, moisture and disturbance regime, across 126 sites in the tall, wet mountain ash forests of Victoria. The rationale was to test the potential for *Tetrarrhena juncea* to be part of a grass–fire cycle, whereby disturbance can promote the dominance of flammable grasses, thereby causing a disturbance–flammability positive feedback. The findings suggested that in areas with wiregrass, disturbances such as fire that reduce tree canopy cover can promote wiregrass dominance, which may, in turn, increase forest flammability. Such feedbacks are globally important, as they will affect how fire regimes respond to climate change.

The judges – the Associate Editors and I – were impressed by the paper’s novelty and key questions, robust experimental design, exemplary statistical analyses and how the findings contribute to our understanding of fire regimes and their management.

It is my pleasure to also acknowledge the seven other student papers that were published in 2020. These covered a wide range of topics, species and ecosystems – all were of a very high standard:

- Isabela Costa’s paper on colleter exudates in *Myrcia splendens* in Brazil (Costa *et al.* 2020);
- Thomas Dawes’ paper on arboreal plants from Lord Howe Island (Dawes *et al.* 2020);
- Marília dos Santos’ paper on the phenology of *Maprounea guianensis* in the neotropical forests of Brazil (dos Santos *et al.* 2020);

- Emily Eakin-Busher’s paper on mating strategies of native plants in urban vegetation fragments in Western Australia (Eakin-Busher *et al.* 2020);
- Paul Foreman’s paper on Aboriginal fire history in the grassy ecosystems of Victoria’s Western Port region (Foreman 2020);
- Cléber Souza’s paper on plant community ecotones in the Cerrado of Brazil (Souza *et al.* 2020), and
- Yanti Winoto-Lewin’s paper on accidental epiphytes in the wet forests of Tasmania (Winoto-Lewin and Kirkpatrick 2020).

Hearty congratulations to all our student authors – you are the future of plant science.

References

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