



The Kernel

A Maize Genetics Cooperation community dispatch

December 15, 2025

Hello Maize Genetics Cooperation (MGC) members!

Welcome to the Fall 2025 edition of **The Kernel**, a semi-annual dispatch for and by the MGC community. The Kernel is published twice per year by the MGC Board of Directors (BOD) to keep our community informed about important events and issues. The Kernel also includes articles, tributes, and notices from the community. **If you wish to distribute information to the MGC community**, such as conferences or job announcements, funding opportunities, or tributes, use this link <https://forms.gle/vH9bfohBeqMiYvrw5>. You can also always find additional information about the [MGC](#), new [papers](#), or other community resources on the [MaizeGDB](#) website.

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1. The 2026 McClintock Prize Winner

Dr. Joe Ecker, Professor and Director of the Genomic Analysis Laboratory at the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences in La Jolla, California, and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, has been selected to receive the 2026 Barbara McClintock Prize for Plant Genetics and Genome Studies. Ecker is being recognized for his pioneering contributions to the development of genetic and epigenetic tools and functional genomics resources for multicellular organisms, from plants to humans, and the use of these tools and resources to discover impactful new biology, extending from plant hormone signal transduction and abiotic stress response pathways to diseases of the human brain. More details can be found [here](#). The McClintock Prize and medal will be conferred during a ceremony in Cologne, Germany, as part of the 2026 Maize Genetics Meeting being held from February 26 - March 1, 2026. The event will include a plenary address by Dr. Ecker to an international audience of meeting attendees.

2. Call for MGC Awards Nominations

We are excited to announce that nominations for the awards coordinated by the Maize Genetics Community are now open and the deadline to submit [nominations](#) is **Monday, January 19th, 2026**. If you would like the awards committee to solicit your nomination for you, then please



submit your nomination by **Monday, December 29th, 2025**. For details about the awards, please see the descriptions below.

The Maize Genetics Cooperation Award and Nominations committee ([MGC ANC](#)) encourage you to nominate outstanding members in our community! Who do you think has made an enormous contribution to our community, in maize genetics, in leadership or in service? For the Cooperator and Leadership awards we encourage you to think broadly — the nominee does not have to be a PI or group leader to be eligible. For Early Career, Mid-Career and Lifetime Awards we encourage you to nominate members of our community from industry, and outside the US. If you have submitted a nomination in a previous year, we encourage you to update it and provide an update on the nominees' continued excellence. If you know of someone who should be recognized, but don't feel qualified to write the nomination letter, please contact a member of the MGC ANC and we will solicit the nomination.

Nominations for 2026 are:

1. The Maize Genetics Cooperator Award
2. The M. Rhoades Early-Career Maize Genetics Award
3. The L. Stadler Mid-Career Maize Genetics Award

Nominations for 2027 are:

1. The R. Emerson Lifetime Maize Genetics Award
2. The McClintock Prize for Plant Genetics and Genome Studies

The ANC has developed standardized [rubrics](#) for evaluating nomination packages. Letter writers please use these rubrics as guidelines for crafting nomination letters. We can recognize our best only if someone nominates them! Please consider doing this to show your appreciation for your colleagues. We look forward to recognizing these individuals at the Maize Genetics Meeting in Cologne!

3. The MGM 2026 meeting registration is open

You are invited to attend the 2026 Maize Genetics Meeting at the Maritim Hotel, Cologne (Köln), Germany, beginning with the evening meal on Thursday, February 26th, and continuing until noon on Sunday, March 1st, 2026. Several pre-meeting workshops are anticipated in the morning/afternoon of Thursday, February 26th. More information about these meetings can be found [here](#). Further details about the program, registration for meeting and housing, abstracts, and transportation are available at the conference [website](#). This website will be updated regularly. Meeting **registration**, **abstract submission**, and **student hotel support deadlines** are **December 19th 2025**, while the **hotel reservation deadline** is **December 25th, 2025**. Please **pay special attention to the earlier deadlines this year**. There are two separate registration procedures, one the [meeting](#) and one for [lodging](#). Abstract submission and preparation guidelines can be found [here](#).

4. Additional financial support for the 2026 MGM

There are five additional awards intended to broaden participation at the 2026 MGM: 1) MaGNET, 2) The Expanding Institutional Access (EIA), 3) The Disciplinary Breadth (DB), 4) The Roots & Shoots Travel Award, and Broadening International Participation (BIP). The deadline for the BIP awards is January 25th, 2026, while the deadlines for the others have



passed. Awards for MaGNET, EIA, and DB will be announced December 12th, 2025. Applications for student lodging support can also be found [here](#).

5. MGC Budget update

The MGC fiscal year came to a close on June 30, 2025, and despite the challenges from lower-than-anticipated-attendance at the MGM 2025 due to government travel restrictions, the MGC was able to maintain its financial position with a stable bank balance of ~\$450,000. This is in large part due to the excellent planning and adaptability of our steering committee. As we look ahead to MGM 2026, we continue to strive to keep costs low and maintain our financial position for the long-term fungibility of the organization. Once again, the steering committee has gone above and beyond to ensure this happens. Please thank the members of this committee when you see them!

6. MGM venue 2028

The Maize Genetics Meeting Steering Committee worked with Conference Direct to identify potential West coast venues for the 2028 meeting. Six sites were initially considered, with 4 in the USA and 2 in Canada. Based on timeframe availability, venue costs, ease of travel, accessibility, safety, and other criteria, Sacramento, CA was chosen. In summary, the Steering Committee recommended and the Board of Directors approved the Sacramento Convention Center in Sacramento, CA for the dates March 2nd-5th, 2028. More information can be found at: <https://www.mgcmeeting.com/2028>

7. BOD activities in support of the MGC

The BOD values your input on how to best serve and support the community. For example, the MGC BOD has been working with MaizeGDB to create redundancies and back-up systems for our community resources in response to recent interruptions in federal support. Please watch out for the MGC survey to be sent out in early January 2026, which will help the BOD understand community priorities at a moment when the research environment has changed dramatically. We look forward to engaging discussions during the Community Session at the 2026 MGM, which will be informed by your responses to the survey.

8. The next issue of The Kernel

The next issue of The Kernel will have summary reports from the MGC BoD and the MGC Committees in preparation for the Community Session at the 2026 Maize Genetics Meeting. We anticipate this will be distributed in early February 2026.

Thank you for reading this edition of The Kernel. We welcome feedback, so please email us at bod.mgc@gmail.com.

To submit entries for consideration for the next edition of The Kernel, please use this link: <https://forms.gle/vH9bfohBeqMiYvrw5>