

PROF. BRENDA WINGFIELD RECEIVES THE CHRISTIAAN HENDRIK PERSOON MEDAL



Prof. Brenda Wingfield was awarded the Christiaan Hendrik Persoon Medal during the awards ceremony at the 49th biennial congress of the Southern African Society for Plant Pathology (SASPP) in Bloemfontein in January. This gold medal is the highest award that the SASPP can make to one of its members. Prof Wingfield received the award for her outstanding contributions to Plant Pathology. This is only the sixth time that the award has been made in 53 years, and Prof Wingfield is the first female member of the SASPP to receive this honour.

Prof Brenda Wingfield is the Acting Dean in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and concurrently a Professor in the Department of Genetics at the University of Pretoria. Her research during the course of the past 20 years has focused on the global movement and evolution of fungal pathogens particularly those on trees. She has been deeply involved in developing tools to study the phylogenetic relationships between tree pathogens. In recent years, she has expanded her research focus to study fungi at the population level. In so doing, she has developed the molecular tools to make this possible. Her research group is one of the most active internationally using DNA based markers to examine the distribution and population dynamics of tree pathogens.

The Persoon medal was first presented to the globally recognised epidemiologist and member of the SASPP, Dr. J.E. van der Plank in 1979. Subsequent recipients include Prof.

W.F.O. Marasas (1987), Prof. M.J. Wingfield (1999), Prof. P.W. Crous (2005), and Prof. Z.A. Pretorius (2009). In receiving the Persoon Medal, Prof Brenda Wingfield is recognized as a plant pathologist of substantial international standing, having been an active member of the SASPP (an affiliate of the International Society for Plant Pathology) for two decades. Importantly, in this time she contributed substantially to plant pathology in South Africa and also globally. Perhaps the clearest view of these contributions are seen via the fact that she has been a supervisor of some of South Africa's most active and best recognized scientists working with plant pathogens, and numerous of these, including a past President of the SASPP, are now working in countries beyond the borders of South Africa. Her receipt of the Christiaan Hendrik Persoon Medal is not only an apt recognition of her scientific accomplishments, but it is a great honour for FABI and the University of Pretoria.



From left to right: Profs Mike Wingfield, Brenda Wingfield and Pedro Crous