



Institute of Plant Breeding, Genetics and Genomics

College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

**IPBGG EXTENDS A HEARTY WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING
ELEVEN NEW STUDENTS FOR FALL SEMESTER 2021:**



Sefa Ayten

Mr. Sefa Ayten is a student in the IPBGG Master's program. He transferred from Michigan State University to University of Georgia in 2021 and is working in Dr. C. Robin Buell's lab. His research is focused on analysis of the germander (*Teucrium marum*) genome. Germander, a member of the mint (*Lamiaceae*) family, produces a number of interesting natural products including teucrein and dolichodolichodial which have anti-insecticidal activities.

Sefa received his B.Sc. degree from Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University in Turkey in Agricultural Genetic Engineering in 2018. He has also completed internships at the James Hutton Institute in Dundee, Scotland and at the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology in Golm.

Please welcome Sefa to UGA, his workspace is CAGT room 248.

His email is: Sefa.Ayten@uga.edu.



Nathaniel Burner

Mr. Nathaniel Burner is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Ph.D. program for 2021. He is working with Dr. Zenglu Li and his research entails performing high throughput genotyping in the lab and phenotyping in the field, and conducting molecular breeding to improve soybean yield and traits of importance using innovative genomic technologies.

Nathaniel received his Bachelor of Science degree in Crop Sciences from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2019). He received his Master of Science degree in Crop Science from North Carolina State University (2021).

Mr. Burner's previous work experience includes a position as an undergraduate research assistant at the University of Illinois Crop Sciences Department (2018-2019); and a position as a plant breeding intern for Dow AgroSciences (2017).

Please welcome Nathaniel to our Institute, his work space is in CAGT room 202; his email address is: nburner@uga.edu.



Brianna Cheek

Ms. Cheek is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Master's program for 2021 working with Dr. Peggy Ozias-Akins. Her duties include conducting molecular breeding research in peanut for disease resistance and quality.

Brianna received her Bachelor of Science degree in Plant and Environmental Soil Science from Texas A&M University (2021).

Ms. Cheek's previous work experience (2018-2021) includes a position as a lab assistant in an environmental monitoring laboratory; student worker positions in a soil characterization lab and potato breeding and genetics lab; an undergraduate research position in the New Beasley Lab at Texas A&M; and an internship for the USDA in Minnesota.

Please welcome Brianna to our Institute, her work space is located in the CAGT Building, room 214. Her email address is: Brianna.Cheek@uga.edu.



Benjamin Culver

Mr. Benjamin Culver is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Master's program for 2021. He is working with Dr. Peng Chee and his duties entail elucidation of genes conferring disease resistance in cotton and/or fiber quality.

Benjamin received his Bachelor of Science degree in Plant Genetics, Breeding and Biotechnology from Purdue University (2021). His previous work experience includes an internship with Inari Agriculture, Inc; a student researcher position at University of Notre Dame; and a lab technician position at Purdue University (2017-2021). He also held several positions working in the community while he completed his studies.

Please welcome Benjamin to our Institute, his work space is located in Tifton at NESPAL South room 220. His email address is: bac41551@uga.edu.



Zachary Fleming

Mr. Zachary Fleming is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Master's program for 2021 working with Dr. Esther van der Knaap. His duties include the mapping and fine mapping of Blossom End Rot genes in tomato. This entails genotyping and selecting seedlings for transplanting to the greenhouse, maintenance of plants in the greenhouse, evaluating and analyzing the symptoms, evaluating the function of candidate genes as well as the causative mutations, creating gRNA, over expression and under expression constructs.

Zachary received his Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture from Kansas State University (2021). His previous work experience includes two research assistant positions at Kansas State University (2017-2021). He also served as a manager for a landscaping firm in Kansas during this period.

Please welcome Zachary to our Institute, his work space is located at the CAGT building room 124. His email address is: Zachary.Fleming@uga.edu.



Jazib Irfan

Mr. Jazib Irfan is a student in the IPBGG Ph.D. program for 2021. He received an HEC Fellowship to support his studies at UGA, and he is working with Dr. Ali Missaoui. His duties include the validation of genomic prediction for yield and sustainability traits in switchgrass. He will be phenotyping 200 half-sib families in two field locations, generating SNP information through GBS and establishing correlations between prediction models and empirical field data.

Jazib received his B.Sc. degree in Agricultural Biotechnology from the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (2016). He received his Master of Science degree in Biotechnology from Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (2018).

His previous work experience includes a position as a research associate in the Agricultural Biotech Division at the National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering in Pakistan (2019-2021). He also held an internship position at the Ayub Agriculture Research Institute in Faisalabad.

Jazib arrived in Athens this summer and started his assistantship in the Missaoui lab. Please welcome him to IPBGG, his work space is located at MPS, room 4115A. His email address is: JazibAli.Irfan@uga.edu.



Namrata Maharjan

Ms. Namrata Maharjan is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Ph.D. program for 2021. She is working with Dr. Soraya Bertoli and her duties entail DNA extraction, plant phenotyping, genotyping, in vitro bioassays, field assays and data analyses.

Ms. Maharjan received her Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from Tribhuvan University in Nepal (2017). She received her Master of Science degree in Biological Sciences from South Dakota State University (2021).

Namrata's work experience includes a position as a graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Biology at S. Dakota State (2019-2021); and a graduate research assistant position in that department (2018-2019). She also held a research internship at the Nepal Agriculture Research Council (2018).

Namrata arrived at UGA this summer and started her assistantship. Please welcome her to our Institute, her work space is located at: CAGT, room 235. Her email address is: Namrata.Maharjan@uga.edu



Harshita Saxena

Ms. Harshita Saxena is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Ph.D. program for 2021. She is working with Drs. Bochra Bahri and Paul Raymer and her duties include genotyping and phenotyping tall fescue and seashore paspalum populations and performing QTL analysis to identify disease resistance genes.

Ms. Saxena received her Bachelor of Science degree in Life Science from the University of Delhi (2019). She received her Master of Science degree in Plant Biotechnology from the TERI School of Advanced Studies in New Delhi (2020).

Harshita's work experience includes Trainee positions at both the Teri School of Advanced Studies and the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (2020). She also held a research internship at Deshbandhu College (2017) and served as a research fellow at the CSIR National Botanical Research Institute in India (2019).

Please welcome her to our Institute, her work space is in room 204 of the Griffin Turfgrass Research & Education Center. Her email address is: Harshita.Saxena@uga.edu.



Brandon Tonnis

Mr. Brandon Tonnis is a student in the IPBGG Ph.D. program for 2021. He is working with Dr. David Bertioli looking at flavor and nutritional and quality traits of interspecific peanut lines and cultivars. His work adds a new dimension to the Wild Peanut Lab. Brandon is based in Griffin but he will interact closely with the lab during his course of study.

Brandon received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Xavier University (1999). He received his Master of Science degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Cincinnati (2002).

Mr. Tonnis' work experience includes a position as a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Cincinnati (1999-2001). After graduation he worked as a molecular biologist at UES/SoBran (2002-2006). Brandon is employed by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture in the Plant Genetic Resources Conservation Unit, initially as a biological sciences lab tech (2006 to 2016), and currently as a geneticist (2016-present). Please welcome Brandon to our Institute, his work space is located in Griffin. His email address is: Brandon.Tonnis@uga.edu.



Sydney Webb

Ms. Sydney Webb is a Research Assistant in the IPBGG Master's program for 2021. She is working with Dr. Peggy Ozias-Akins and her duties include conducting breeding and biotechnology research on peanut for improvement of disease resistance and reproductive traits.

Sydney received her Bachelor of Science degree in Crop and Soil Science and a minor in Horticulture from North Carolina State University (2021).

Ms. Webb's previous work experience was at Big Branch Nursery and spanned 9 years while working part-time when attending school and full-time during the summer. She participated in various aspects of growing and supervision of other employees.

Please welcome Sydney to our Institute, her work space is located in the CAGT Building, room 214. Her email address is: Sydney.Webb@uga.edu.



Muhammad Habib Widyawan

Mr. Muhammad Widyawan is a student in the IPBGG Ph.D. program for 2021. His studies are supported by the Fulbright Foreign Student Program and he works with Dr. Zenglu Li. His duties include working on identification of QTL/genes for disease resistance and developing molecular marker assays for marker-assisted selection in soybean.

Muhammad received his Bachelor of Science degree in Plant Breeding from Gadjah Mada University (2014). He received his Master of Science degree in Plant Breeding and Biotechnology from Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia (2018).

Mr. Widyawan's previous work experience includes a position as a lecturer in the Department of Agronomy at Gadjah Mada University (2018-2021).

Please welcome Habib to our Institute, his work space is located at: CAGT Rm 202. His email address is: widyawan@uga.edu.