

APS Potomac Distinguished Service Award 2022

The 2022 recipient of the Potomac division of the American Phytopathological society distinguished service award received a Bachelor's of Science degree in Geography from Southern Illinois University in 1994. Our awardee then earned a Master's of Science Degree in Plant Pathology from The Ohio State University in 2002 and a PhD in Plant Pathology from The Ohio State University in 2005 with a dissertation on *Phomopsis* leaf blight of strawberry and grape.

Our award recipient then moved to University Park, Pennsylvania to work as a postdoctoral scholar at Pennsylvania State University and then to Manhattan, Kansas as a research associate at Kansas State University performing research on epidemiology of *Fusarium* head blight. During this time, they co-authored the book chapter Plant Pathogens as Indicators of Climate Change in the book *Climate Change: Observed Impacts on Plant Earth*, with the third edition published in 2021.

Since 2009, our awardee has worked at the Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center of Virginia Tech in Winchester, VA, working on perhaps the most important commodity of all – wine grapes. In this position, the awardee develops effective disease management methods for grapevine. They are highly regarded in the region by both other researchers and the expanding wine grape industry due to their efforts to help the industry implement appropriate disease management and mitigation practices through applied research projects on a range of serious grapevine diseases, such as Pierce's Disease, Ripe Rot, Phomopsis Cane and Leaf Spot, Grapevine Leaf Roll-Associated Virus, Grapevine Red Blotch Virus... and probably even more but we don't want to scare away potential new vineyard founders listing all of the pathogens our awardee must work diligently to manage. The awardee is also an excellent colleague and cooperater – generous and kind with their time, always with a cheerful sense of humor, and hard working to solve critical grape pathology issues. Their research includes disease surveillance, cultural and chemical disease and vector management, fungicide and fungicide-alternative testing, fungicide resistance examination, cultivar disease susceptibility evaluation, and development of novel diagnostic tools. The awardee has advised numerous successful graduate students, contributing to developing the next generation of plant pathologists. It is also rumored, through the grapevine, that the awardee has significant expertise in applied statistics and has helped numerous colleagues with statistical analyses of complex datasets.

In addition to publishing important research publications, our award recipient has developed a high-impact extension program. In Extension, the recipient uses traditional methods and social media for dissemination of education materials to educate growers and Extension agents in Virginia and nationally. The awardee has developed a web-based diagnostic app for grape diseases and is the smiling person behind the very helpful @grapepathology twitter handle and the grape pathology blog.

Our award recipient has been heavily involved with the American Phytopathological Society for more than 20 years. They were recognized for their excellent research as a graduate student through multiple APS travel awards. The award recipient has been involved with our Potomac division since 2009 and served as the division Secretary/Treasurer in 2014, Vice President in 2015, and President in 2016. The award recipient routinely encourages excellent student participation at the meetings as well. The award recipient has served as the local arrangements chair for what is believed to be a record four times, serving as the local arrangements chair in 2013, 2020..., 2021..., and 2022. Hopefully, serving as the local arrangements chair for three years in a row without hosting an in-person meeting will also be a record that is never broken. Thanks to their commitment to the division, they will even serve as the local arrangements chair for the in-person meeting in 2023!

Given the outstanding commitment to research and extension, service to APS, and continued commitment to the Potomac Division, it is an honor and pleasure to announce that Mizuho Nita has been selected as the 2022 APS Potomac Division Distinguished Service Award recipient.