



In Memoriam

October 18, 2024

Markus Tuller

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Markus Tuller, a 26-year member of SSSA and 24-year member of ASA, passed away in May 2024 in Tucson, AZ. Born in Wartberg, Austria, in 1967 as the oldest of three sons, he grew up in a rural, agricultural setting that fostered his interest in nature and endowed him with a life-long practical habits.

After earning a M.S. degree in Civil Engineering in 1993 and a Ph.D. in Soil Physics and Water Management in 1997 from the University of Natural and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna, Austria, Tuller became a postdoc at Utah State University. He and Dani Or made major disciplinary contributions in the areas of capillary processes in fractured media and transport processes in swelling soils, and they showed alternatives to the circular capillary tube and soil rigidity assumptions.

Tuller began his faculty career at the University of Idaho in 2001 before he moved to University of Arizona in 2007 as an Associate Professor. He improved X-ray CT image analysis of macro- and micro-pore systems and worked with Scott Jones and others on the design of root zone environments under low-gravity conditions. As a visiting professor at Aarhus University in Denmark in 2013, Tuller worked with Lis Wollesen de Jonge, Per Moldrup, and their team to quantify the effect of solid phase composition on soil architecture and related transport processes.

More recently, Tuller became involved in proximal and remote sensing research for soil moisture mapping with Morteza Sadeghi and Ebrahim Babaeian among many others. He was extremely creative in numerous areas and with more collaborators than can be mentioned here. Tuller's list of more than 110 publications reflects what an outstanding and productive, interactive scientist he was. Among the huge number of awards and recognitions that he received was one that reflects one of his passions: The Recognition by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development through Mentoring. He is survived by two brothers, his aunt, six cousins, and two nephews in Austria along with three cousins in Canada. We have lost a great colleague and friend.

—Source: Marcel Schaap, Dani Or, Scott Jones, Lis Wollesen de Jonge, Per Moldrup, Morteza Sadeghi, Ebrahim Babaeian, Ole Wendroth for all friends and colleagues in the W4188 Group and the SPH Division

Lila Vodkin

Lila Ann Vodkin, a 30-year member of ASA and CSSA, passed away on June 20, 2024 at the age of 73.

Vodkin earned a bachelor's degree in Physics from the University of South Carolina in 1972, followed by a master's degree in Biology in 1975. She completed her doctorate in Genetics at North Carolina State University in 1978.

From 1978 to 1987, Vodkin served as a research geneticist at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, part of the USDA-ARS. In 1987, she joined the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an associate professor of crop molecular biology and genetics in the Department of Agronomy, now the Department of Crop Sciences. She was promoted to professor in 1995, becoming the first woman to achieve the rank of full professor in the department. In 2004, she was awarded the Charles Adlai Ewing Endowed Chair in Soybean Molecular Biology, a position she held until her retirement in 2014.

Vodkin was a world-renowned expert in the genetics of soybeans. Her research focused on gene isolation, regulation, and transfer in higher plants. She developed public genomic resources for soybeans and collaborated extensively with nanotechnologists to enhance gene detection methods. Her work has had a profound impact on the improvement of economically important traits in soybeans.



Lila Vodkin

Throughout her career, Vodkin published more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and was a dedicated mentor, supervising 11 doctoral students and 10 master's students. She also played a pivotal role in advising and assisting younger faculty members in achieving tenure and promotion.

—Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

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