

Incoming ASPT President Talk Presented after dinner at the ASPT Banquet

Networking or not working: can we diversify botany?



Dr. Chelsea Specht obtained her BS from the University of Delaware and her MS and PhD in Biology as part of the joint program between New York University and the New York Botanical Garden. After a postdoc in the Department of Botany at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, Chelsea joined the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley's College of Natural Resources as Assistant Professor and Plant Organismal Biologist in 2005. She is currently Professor in the Departments of Plant and Microbial Biology and Integrative Biology, and Curator of Monocots in the University and Jepson Herbaria (UC/JEPS) as well as on the faculty advisory committee for the UC Botanical Garden at Berkeley. Chelsea's research uses traditional morphological and developmental techniques combined with molecular genetics, comparative genomics and evolutionary biology to study the natural diversity of plants and to help better understand the forces creating and sustaining this diversity. Her research and that of her students incorporates elements of systematics, developmental genetics, comparative phylogenetics and molecular evolution to study the evolution and diversification of fundamentally interesting plant traits (FIPTs) in diverse non-model systems, taking advantage of living and preserved collections to advance their research in plant systematics, biogeography, phylogeography, and developmental evolution. Much of her work has focused on the tropical order Zingiberales and includes species-, family- and ordinal-level phylogenetics, phylogeography, molecular evolution of floral development, genomics, taxonomic revisions, species descriptions and monographs. She is currently working on a monograph of New World Costaceae with Dr. Paul and Hiltje Maas -- so watch out world, that rapid radiation will be resolved!!! She supports an active and creative research group who benefit from an open, diverse, and inclusive environment that promotes excellence in scholarship, research, teaching and outreach and are intolerant of limitations set by biases. At UC Berkeley, Dr. Specht has been active on a task for Transforming Graduate Admissions aimed at developing mechanisms for diversifying our faculty in STEM through inclusive practices for graduate recruitment and retention, and has served on the Academic Senate Committee on Diversity, Equity and Campus Climate tasked with developing best practices for creating and sustaining an inclusive environment on campus, in laboratories and in classrooms. She has a husband who is an entomologist and a child (8) who loves ocotillo but is allergic to jojoba.