

MASTER CLASSES IN NEMATODOLOGY, SOIL BIOLOGY AND SOIL HEALTH

A series of Master Classes are being held in 2022 and 2023 to cater for people who would like to learn more about the fascinating biological world beneath our feet. All soil organisms are covered but nematodes are the focus because in addition to being important pests, they play a major role in maintaining the health of our soils.

Graham and Marcelle Stirling are providing the classes as a philanthropic venture, in the hope that they will stimulate interest in a group of soil organisms that have largely been ignored by the tertiary education sector in Australia. Thus, there is no fee for the classes.

The classes to be held in 2023 are now being organised. The 2022 classes could be repeated at other locations in 2023, or classes on other topics could be arranged. If you would like to attend a class, suggest a topic, help arrange a class, or suggest a location where a class could be held, please contact Graham Stirling by phone (0412 083 489) or email: graham.stirling@biolcrop.com.au

Details of the 2022 program

Topic	Location	No. of attendees
Identification and quantification of plant-parasitic nematodes for diagnostic purposes	U Sydney	22
Nematode pests of turfgrass	U Melbourne	24
Improving the health of vegetable-growing soils and reducing losses from nematode pests	U Melbourne	20
Nematodes: an important component of the soil biological community	U Melbourne	18
The soil biological community and its role in improving the health of agricultural soils	U Queensland	14
Natural enemies of nematodes: their ecology and role as biological control agents	U Queensland	10
Morphological and molecular identification of plant-parasitic and free-living nematodes	U Queensland	18

The attendees at the turf class were superintendents of golf clubs and sports venues who were struggling to manage southern sting nematode (*Ibipora lolii*). Those who came to the other classes had a wide range of roles, skills, and interests: lecturers, researchers, and technical staff at universities; agricultural consultants; staff of state Departments of Agriculture; undergraduate and postgraduate students; and professional staff from chemical companies. One encouraging sign was that people were prepared to travel long distances to attend. In fact, the nematode identification class had attendees from Indonesia, New Zealand, Victoria, NSW, and WA, with overseas and interstate visitors outnumbering the Queenslanders.

One pleasing aspect was that during university semester breaks, three universities were prepared to provide excellent laboratory facilities free of charge. This meant that attendees had access to microscopes and all the equipment required to work with nematodes and other soil organisms.

A big thank you to those who helped arrange the classes at each location.

- Sophia Callaghan, Andrew Daly, Tatjana Matic and David Guest in Sydney
- Helen Hayden, Simone Staples, Bruce MacPhee, Zali Mahoney and Danielle Park in Melbourne
- Gurion Ang and Lois Eden in Brisbane

Also, many thanks to those who contributed to the classes in other ways.

- Nigel Crump for discussing biosecurity measures for Potato Cyst Nematode in Melbourne
- Neil Wilson for running the practical sessions on molecular identification in Brisbane
- Jenny Cobon and Lois Eden for contributing their nematological skills at the Brisbane class



Zarmeen Hassan AUSVEG National Manager, Engagement and Extension, at the Vegetable Class at the University of Melbourne.



The nematode diagnostic class at the University of Sydney



Attendees at the nematode identification class at UQ