

2003 C.D. NELSON AWARD

Peter James Facchini



Peter Facchini (left) receiving the 2003 C.D. Nelson Award from Norm Huner (right) CSPP President (2001-2003) during the banquet of the CSPP Annual Meeting in Antigonish NS

In 1987, Peter Facchini initiated graduate studies at the University of Toronto under the supervision of Frank Dicosmo. His PhD thesis involved groundbreaking research on the immobilization of cultured plant cells to polymer surfaces for the production of secondary metabolites. In 1991 Peter began postdoctoral research under the supervision of Joe Chappel at the University of Kentucky to further develop his molecular biology skills and interest in plant secondary metabolism. Peter returned to Canada in 1992 as an NSERC postdoctoral fellow in Vince DeLuca's laboratory at the University of Montréal. While in Montreal, Peter worked on the enzymology, molecular biology, and cell biology of alkaloid biosynthesis in opium poppy. These studies served to establish the foundation for the original research program that Peter subsequently initiated upon his

recruitment in 1995 as a Faculty member in the Dept. of Biological Sciences at the University of Calgary.

In the 8 years that Peter has been at the University of Calgary, he has developed into an independent leader in his chosen field of research. He has published profusely, authoring over 50 publications to date in high impact journals such as *Plant Physiology*, *Planta*, *J. Biol. Chem.*, and *Plant Mol. Biol.* Peter's research excellence has demonstrated how well integrated biochemical and molecular biological studies can contribute fundamental knowledge of how plants develop specialized pathways and cells for manufacturing important secondary metabolites such as morphine. This information will facilitate metabolic engineering of these pathways since Peter's group has also developed an opium poppy transformation system. Peter's pioneering exploits in the detailed characterization of the biochemistry, cell biology, and molecular biology of alkaloid metabolism in opium poppy were recently acknowledged in the form of a prestigious invited review article in the *2001 Annual Review of Plant Physiology and Plant Molecular Biology*, as well as a 2002 Tier II Canada Research Chair. The CSPP is delighted to honor Peter Facchini as a very deserving recipient for the C.D. Nelson Award "in recognition of outstanding achievements by a young scientist to plant physiology in Canada".

Bill Plaxton, Luc Varin, and David Kristie
C.D. Nelson Nomination Committee