

An introduction to the genus
Phytophthora

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&

The Internet

What are *Phytophthoras*?

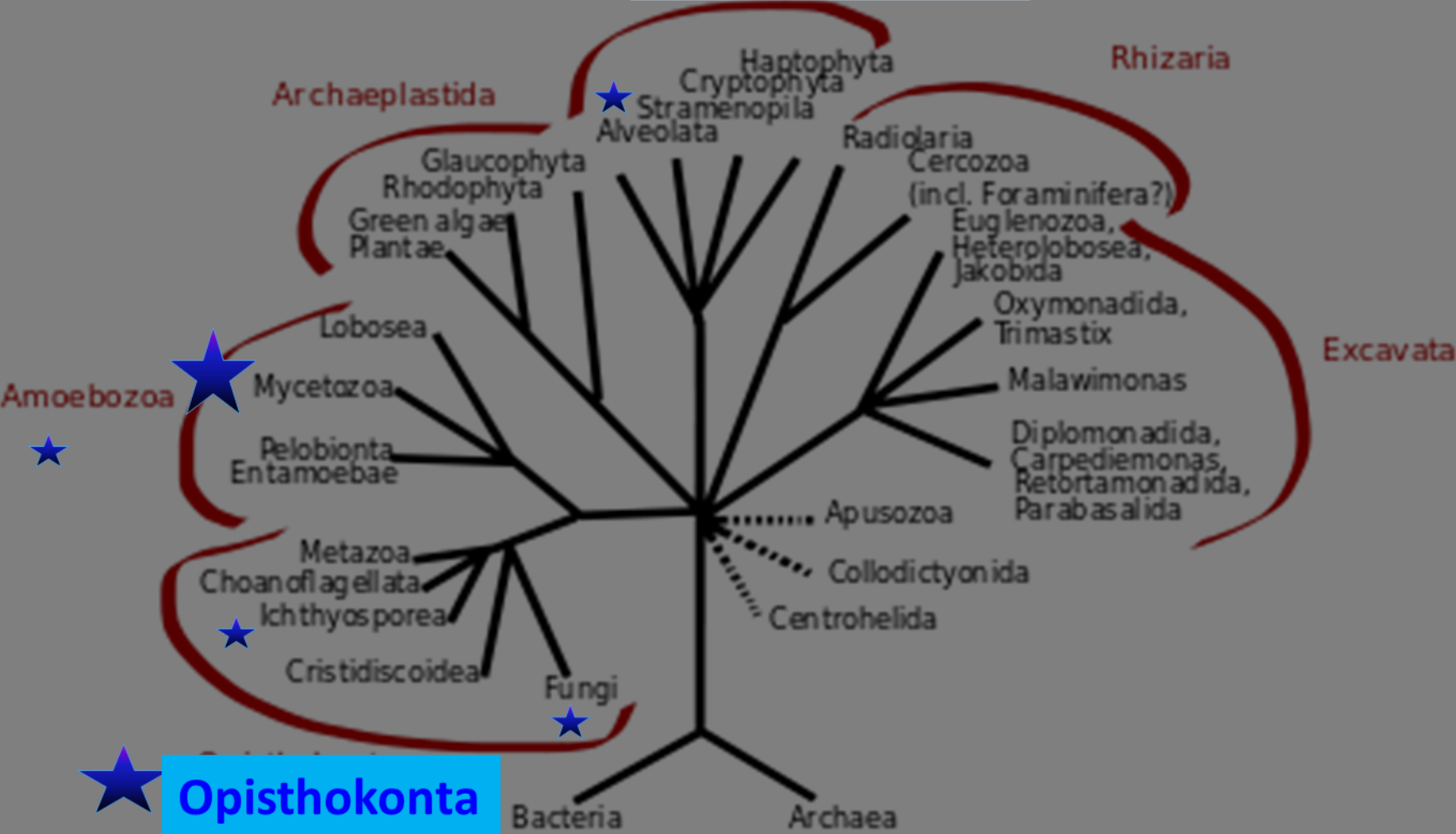
- Fungi ?
- Fungus-like organisms?
- Water molds ?

Oomycota

- Belong to a kingdom that includes kelp and diatoms
- Kingdom used to be called Chromista (brown algae), it is now the Straminopila

Future classification systems are based on protozoan roots

Chromalveolata

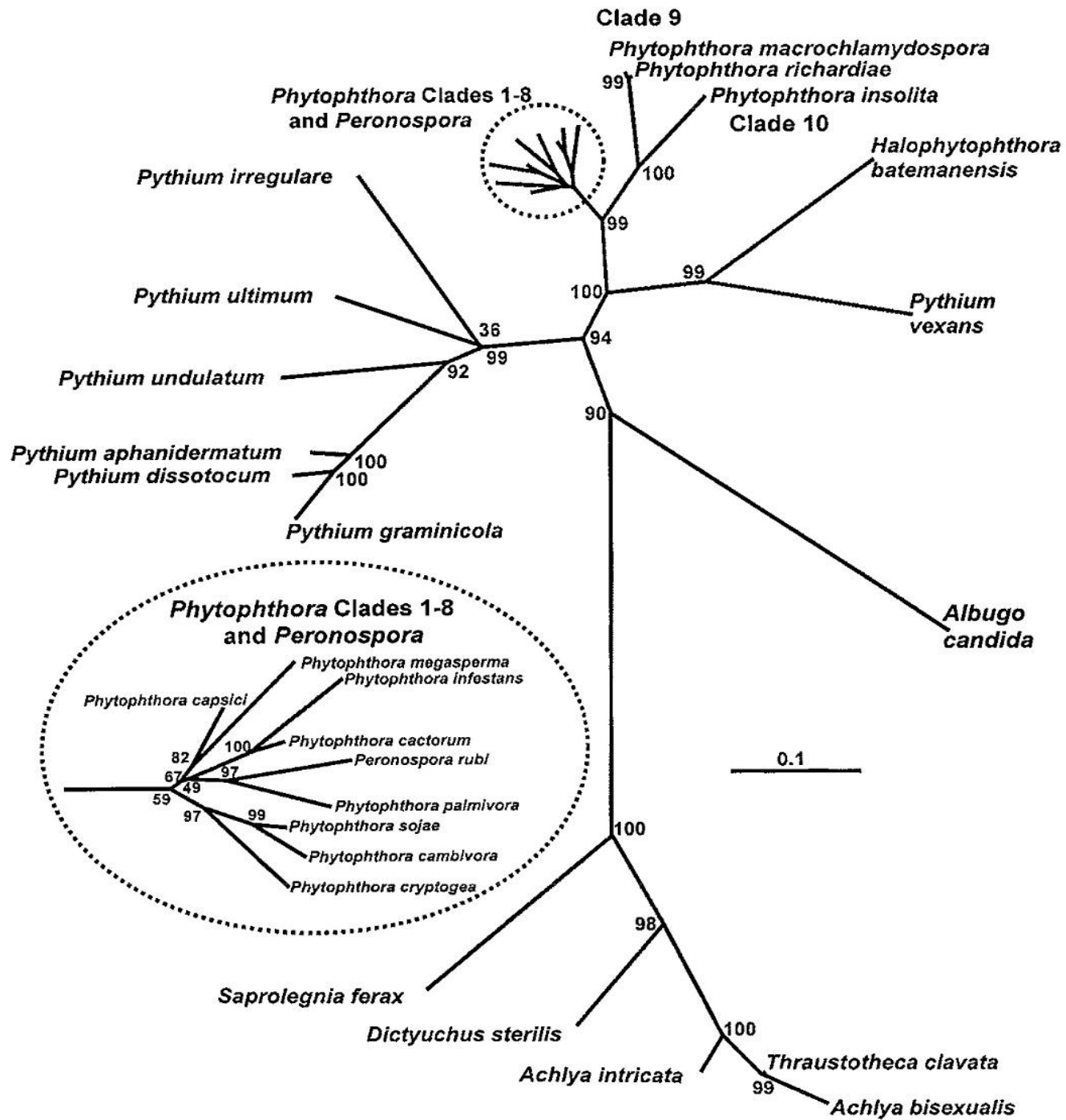


Wikipedia image

★ = historically included in study of "fungi"

Oomycota

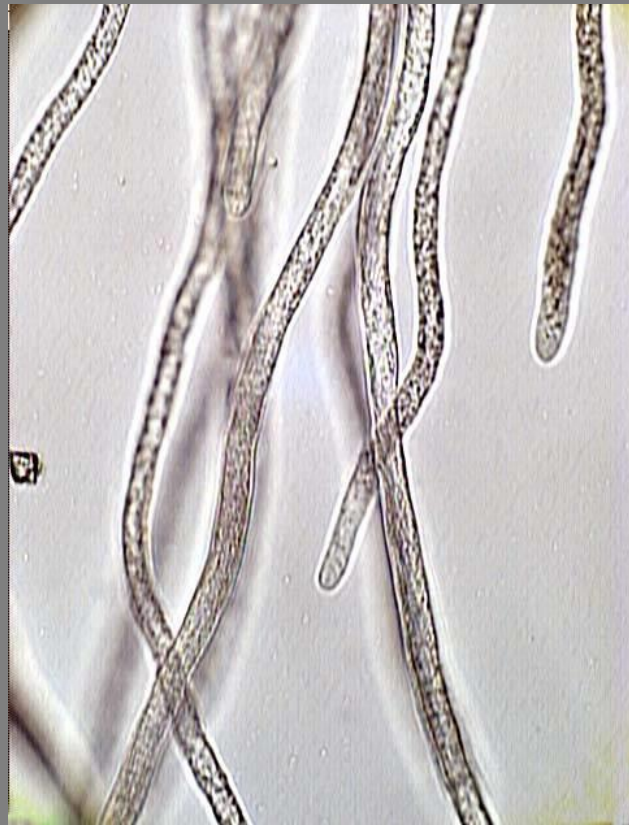
- It includes many important plant pathogens:
 - *Peronospora*: mostly aerial
 - *Pythium*: mostly soilborne organisms
 - *Phytophthora*: mixed biology



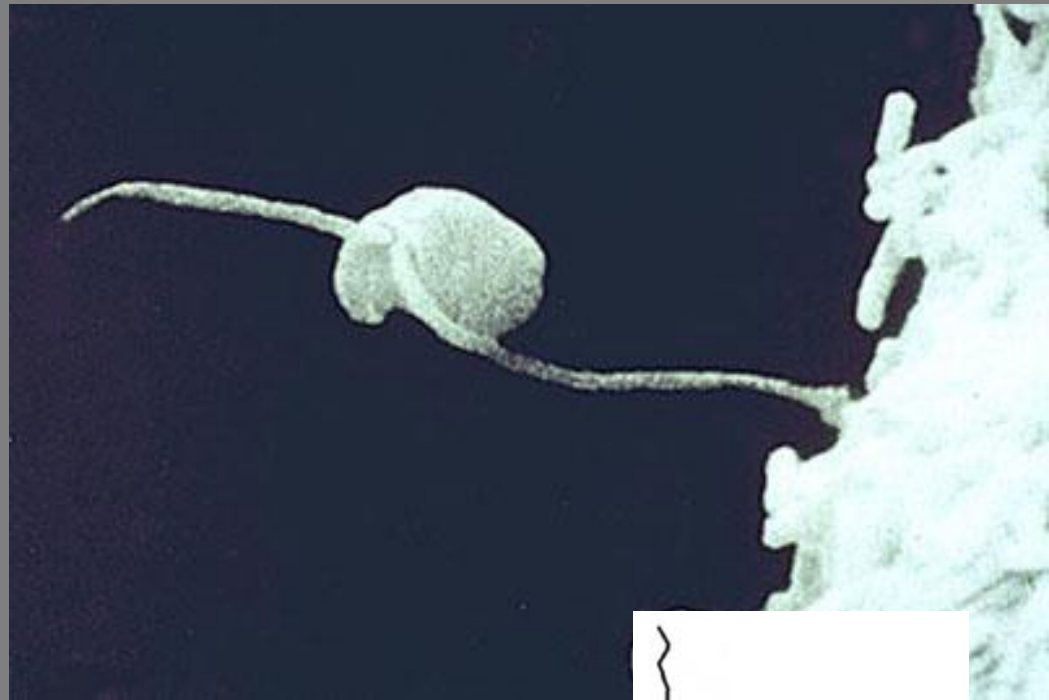
PHYLUM **Oomycota**

CLASS **Oomycete**

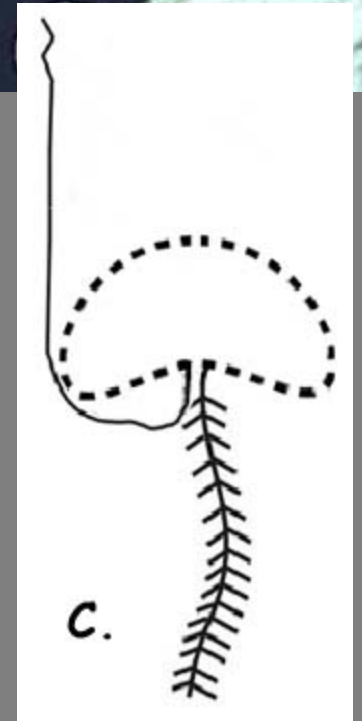
ORDER **Peronosporales**



coenocytic 2n mycelia



**biflagellate
zoospore**



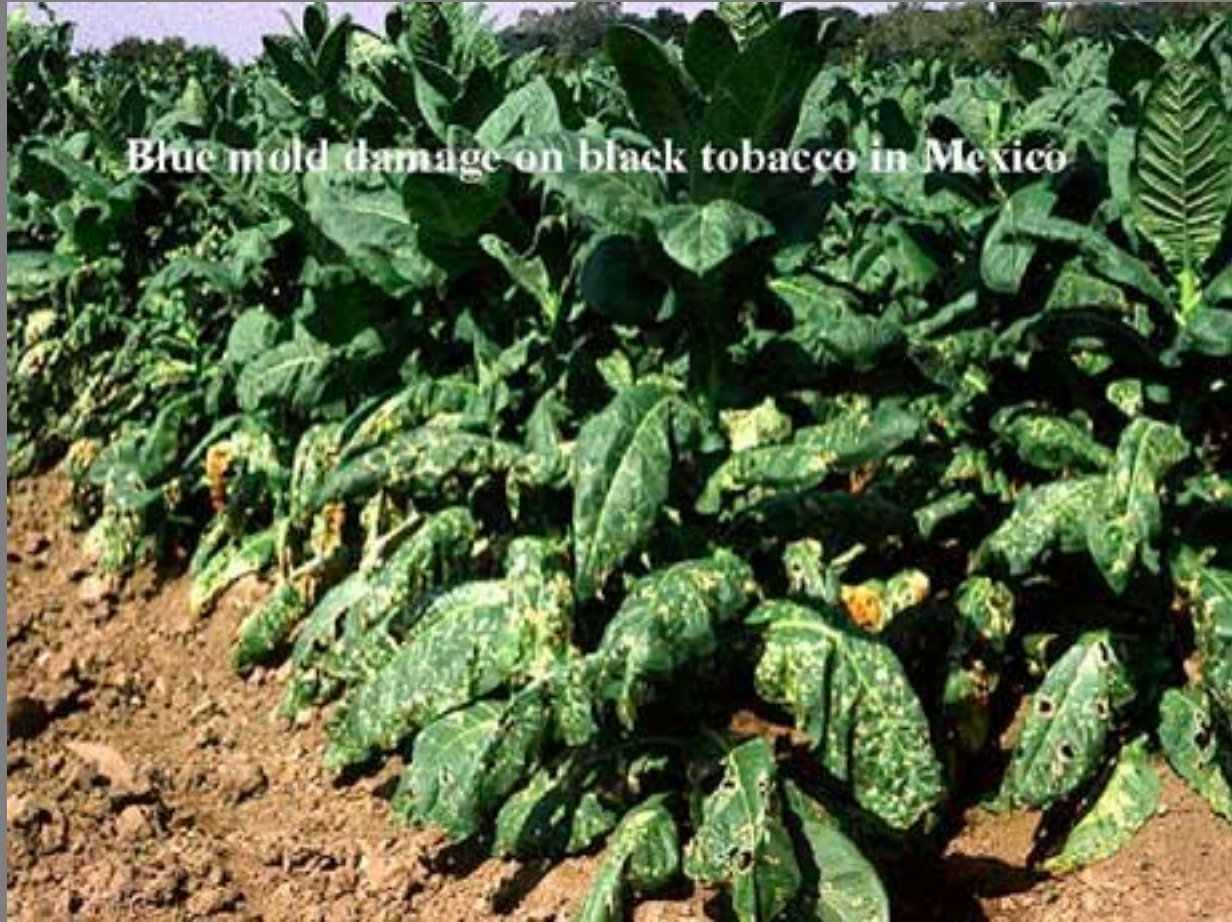
Oomycetes are not fungi

- Cellulose in cell wall
- Ploidy is $2n$
- Result of sexual activity is oospore ($2n$)
- Meiosis, somatogamy, caryogamy all occur at the same time
- Water adapted biology, flagellate phase
- No septa, holocoenocytic hyphae
- Chitin in cell wall
- Ploidy is n , or $n+n$
- Result of sexual activity is a spore n
- Meiosis, somatogamy, caryogamy are usually interrupted by vegetative (somatic phase)
- Better adapted for aerial transmission
- Septate hyphae

Blue mold of tobacco caused by *Peronospora tabacina*

- Ability to travel aerially for hundreds of kilometers from Caribbean to Southern US
- Ability to predict arrival of inoculum based on weather pattern
- Some species capable of over-wintering in buds

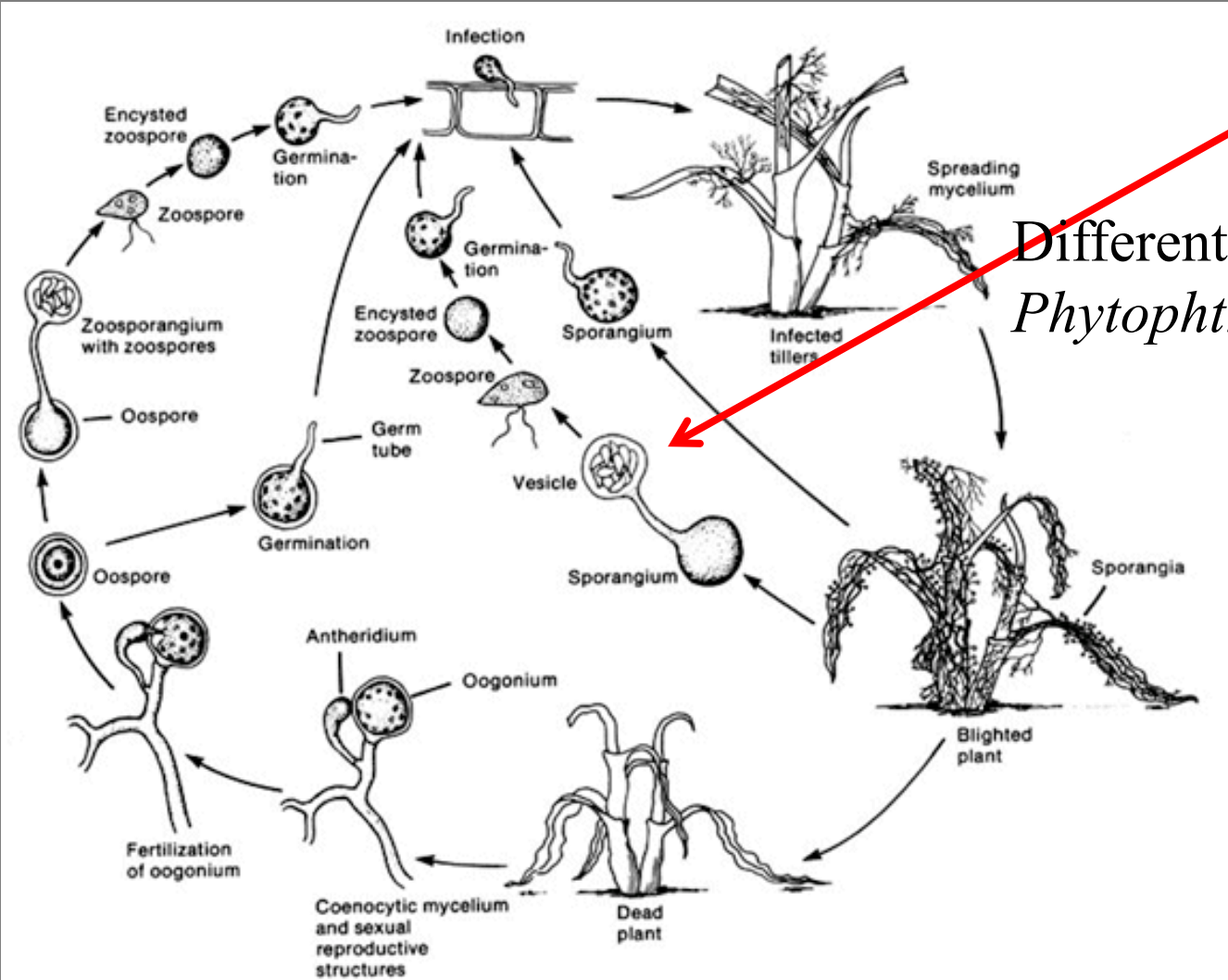
Blue mold damage on black tobacco in Mexico



Phythium

- Mostly soilborne pathogens of plants, but at least one (*P. insidiosum*) causes a severe skin disease in mammals
- They are usually generalists, meaning they can affect a broad range of hosts
- Together with *Phytophthora*, *Rhizoctonia* and *Fusarium* responsible for a serious agricultural problem called damping off
- Some species are mycoparasites and have been used as biocontrol agents

Life cycle



Different than *Phytophthora*

(Courtesy R.W. Smiley, P.H. Dernoeden, and B.B. Clarke), Compendium of Turfgrass diseases, 2nd edition, Page 47.)

Important structures

- **Sporangia:** size, shape, L:B, papillate or not, deciduous or not
- **Stalks:** length
- **Zoospores. Encysted zoospores**
- **Chlamydospores:** how are they carried (lateral vs. terminal), size, color, ornamentation
- **Oospores**
- **Hyphae:** swellings present or absent, linear or tormented
- **Colony morphology:** appressed vs aerial, fast-growing vs. slow-growing

Damping off: because of generalist nature and of ability to overwinter, this is a serious issue in commercial facilities and in reforestation projects

- Pre-emergence



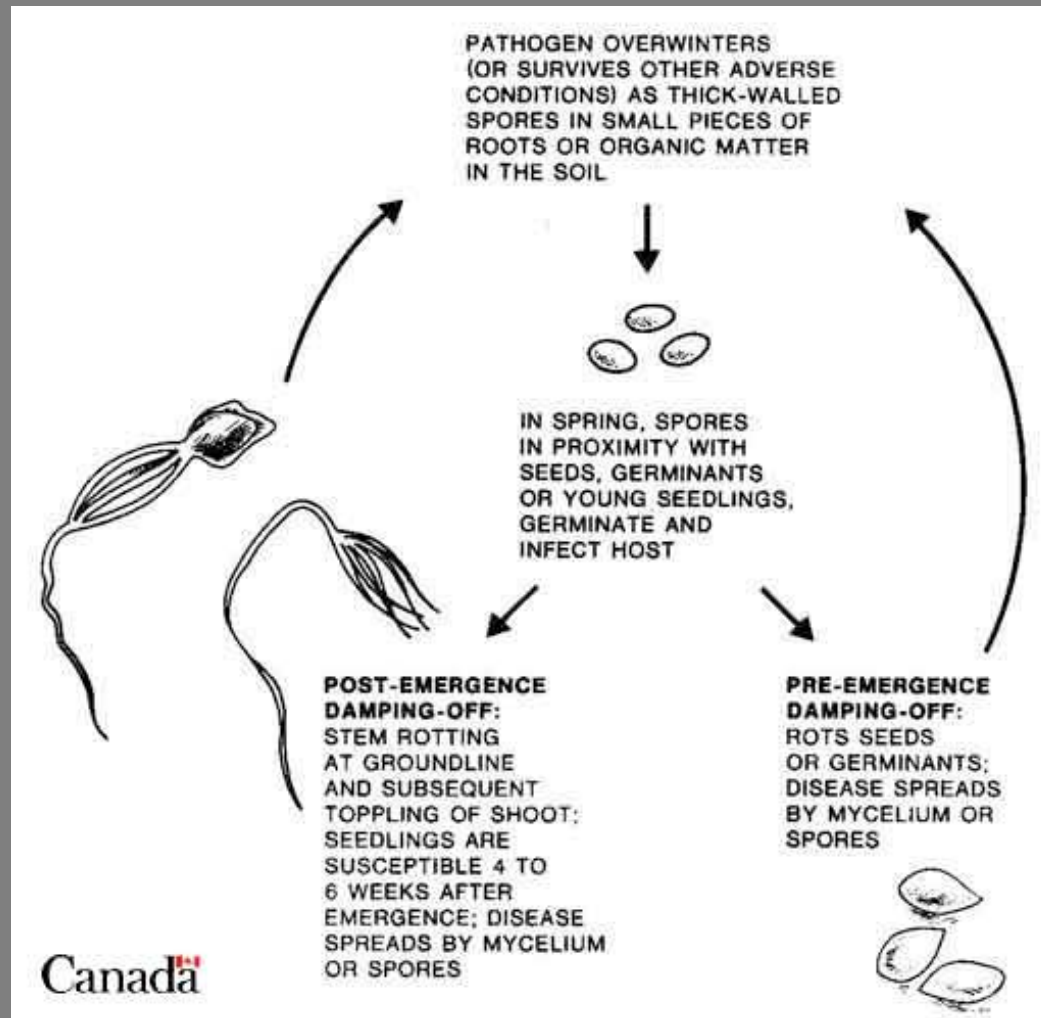
Pre-emergence damping off
in soybean

- Post emergence



Post emergence damping off
of yellow pine

Life history of damping off

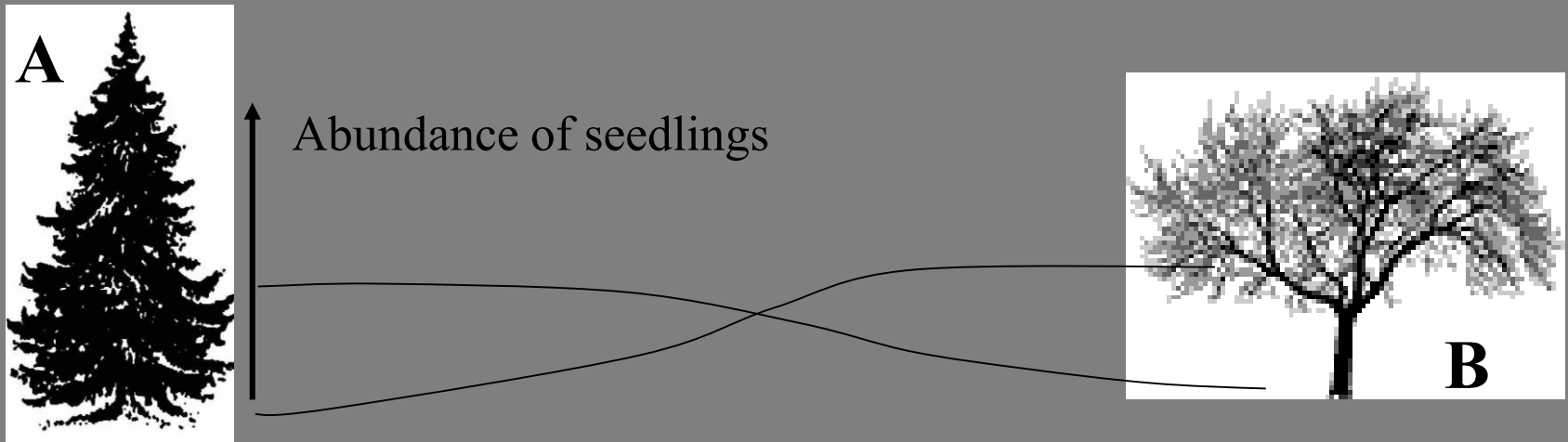


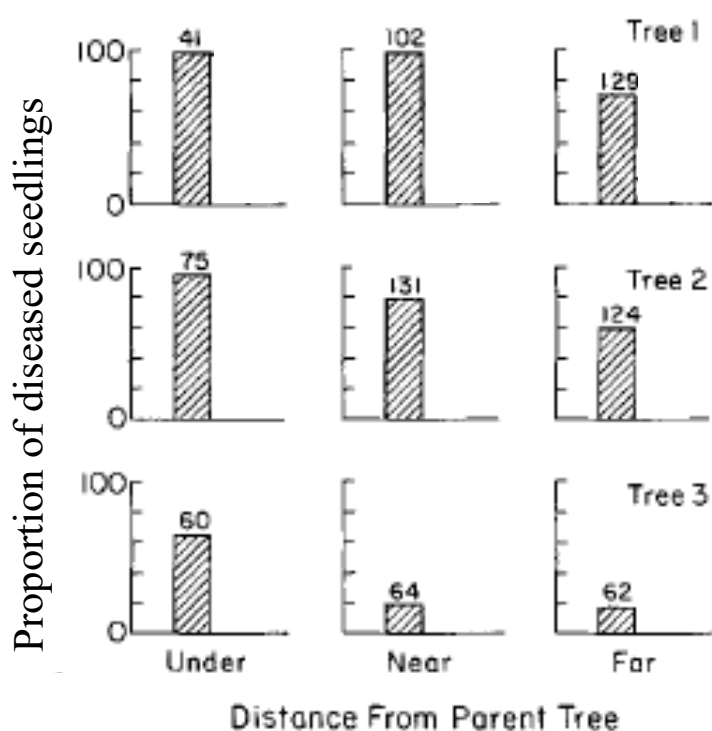
Key genus for the understanding of ecological role of soilborne microbes

- Negative feedback processes: progressive increase in reduction of % success of regeneration
- Optimal allocation of resources by culling seedlings that are less fit early on in the revegetation process thus bringing populations to viable density without wasting resources
- Major drivers of biodiversity: Janzen-Connell hypothesis

Janzen-Connell hypothesis

“Adults, by harboring host-specific pathogens and herbivores, will locally reduce the recruitment success of con-specific juveniles”





Lower mortality
away from
parent tree

Fig. 2. The proportion of seedlings of *Platypodium elegans* dying from damping-off disease in the distance-density experiment. Values represent totals summed for 4 replicates of a given treatment. The total number of seeds germinating is given above each bar. Shaded bars represent high density quadrats; unshaded bars represent low density quadrats

**Pathogen mortality of tropical tree seedlings:
experimental studies of the effects of dispersal distance,
seedling density, and light conditions**

Phytophthora

- Some important plant pathogens, with very well known history
 - *Phytophthora infestans* and the Irish potato famine
 - *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and the Jarrah dieback in Australia. Chestnut decline and littleleaf disease of pines in Southeastern USA

The Irish Potato Famine

- From 1845 to 1850
- *Phytophthora infestans*
- Resulted in the death of 750,000
- Emigration of over 2 million, mainly to the United States.



WOMAN BEGGING AT CLONAKILTY.

Phytophthora: “plant destructor”

- Best known pathogen whose long-distance transport linked to agriculture.
 - *Infected root-stocks*
 - *Infested soil*
 - *Infected plants*

100+ species of *Phytophthora*

- 60 until a few years ago, research accelerated, especially by molecular analyses
- Differentiated on basis of:
 - Type of sexual intercourse
 - Type of sexual activity
 - Number of hosts
 - Ideal temperature
 - Type of biology (soilborne, splash, airborne)
 - Evolutionary history (Waterhouse-Cooke)

Type of sexual strategy

Homothallic species, will produce both oogonia and antheridia and mate by themselves (hermaphrodite), low genetic variability. Strong inbreeding.

Heterothallic species need two individuals with different MATING TYPES. Normally defined as A1 and A2. Out-crossing species.

How do *Phytophthoras* “score”....

- There has to be recognition of other sex, then foreplay, then sex
- Two mating types (A1 and A2) code for different lipids. Lipids are used to identify other sex
- Males and females then communicate through pheromones
- Antheridiol (Raper 1939) is produced by the female and stimulates in the male: a)- the production of the male organ antheridium; b)- the production of oogoniol that will then stimulate the female to produce the oogonia

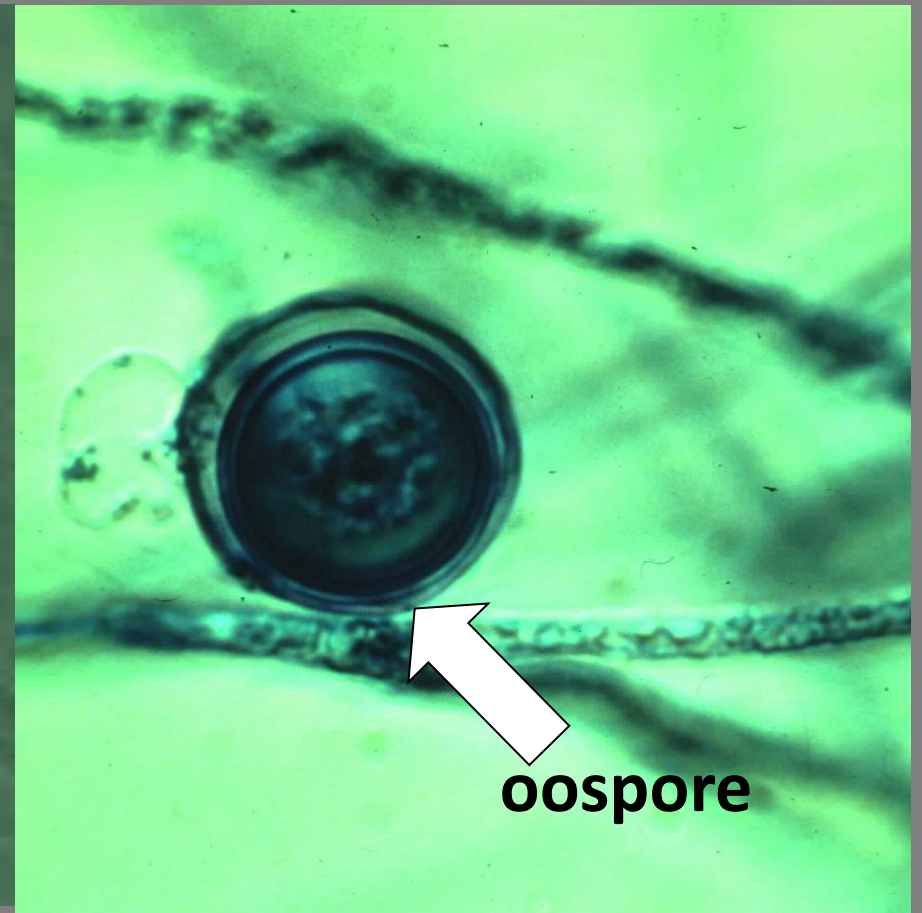
Nature of sexual contact

Oogonium (female sexual structure),
trichogyne (receptive hyphae)

Antheridium (male sexual structure)

Amphiginous, Paragynous, Perigynous (based
on how the two mate)

Sexual Reproduction



Two styles of attachment of antheridia and oogonia



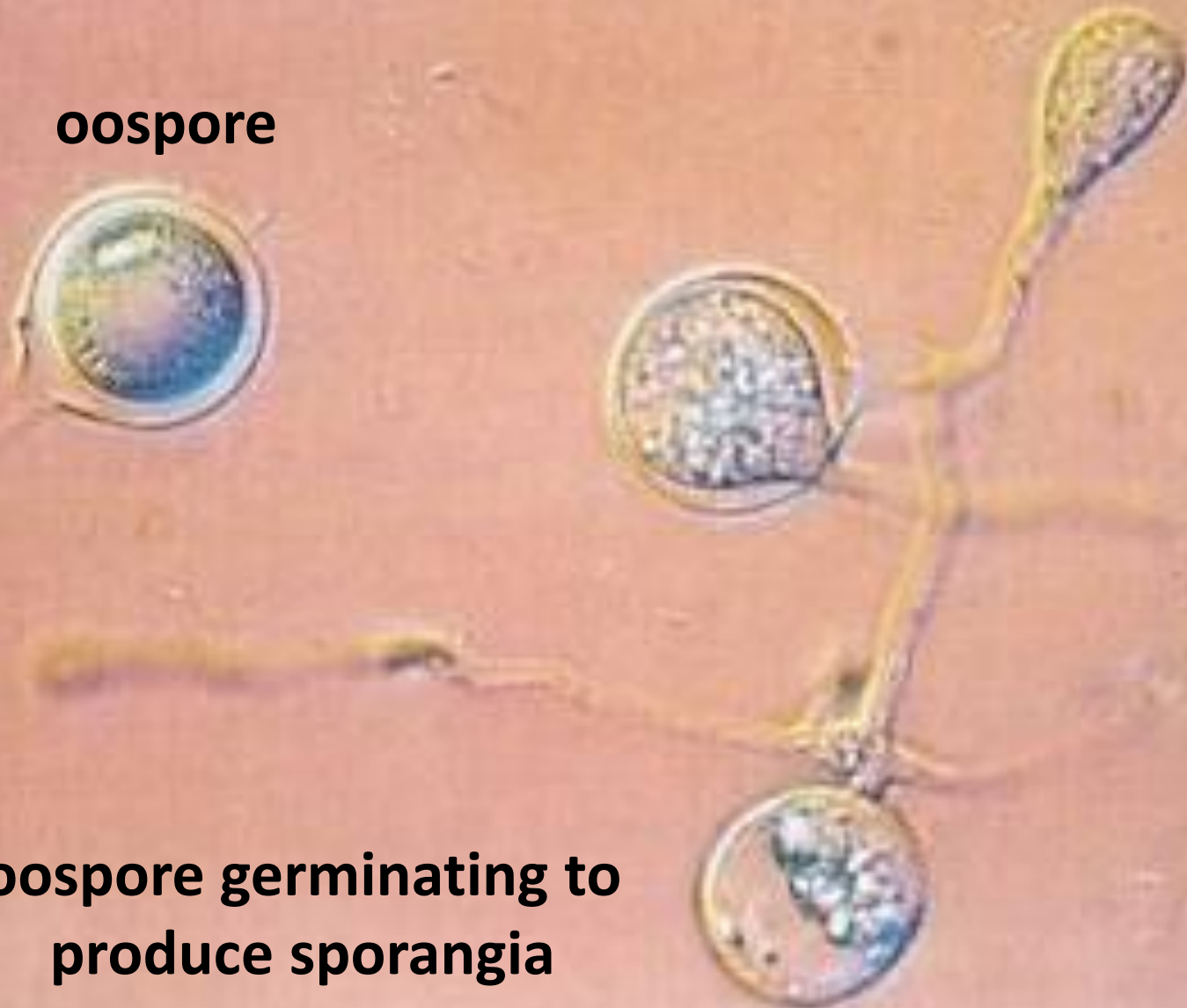
amphigynous



paragynous

oospore

**oospore germinating to
produce sporangia**



Type of sexual strategy

In area of origin expectations are:

- Both mating types if heterothallic
- Sexual activity and large number of different genotypes
- If species is homothallic expectation is that populations in isolated areas should be different genetically because of lack of gene flow and genetic drift (basic Darwinian concept)

Type of sexual strategy

If species is exotic, expectations are:

- Often one mating type only, or mating types introduced at different times.

- Low genotypic diversity, prevalence of clonal lineages

- If species is homothallic expectation is that all individuals will be similar, because there has been no time for genetic differentiation

Type of sexual strategy

Why should we care about sex ?

- Ability to recombine alleles, better potential of adaptation to new conditions
- Ability to exchange genes with other individuals, if gene pool is large, it can be a great adaptive advantage
- For instance: ability to overcome the fungicide metalaxyl happened when A1 and A2 of *P. infestans* got together and reproduced.

More reasons to care about sex

- Oospores that are the end result of successful mating are extremely hardy, thick walled spores that act like survival structures capable of enduring extremely adverse conditions. Makes sanitation incredibly arduous
- Homothallic species tend to have a broader ecological range because they easily produce oospores

...and even more reasons to care about sex

- There may be different adaptive alleles linked to the two different mating types genes. These alleles may not be recombined but presence of both A1 and A2 means that populations can count on a broader array of genes
- *P. cinnamomi*: in general only A2 is found where pathogen is exotic. However A1 appears to be more aggressive on Camellias

However in the absence of sex...

- Genetically isolated populations undergo an independent evolution and adaptation resulting in so called lineages with dramatically different phenotypes
- Multiple introductions from different lineages can have dramatic impacts, yet very rarely are these lineages regulated independently

Number of hosts

- Single hosts, specialized: *P. sojae*, *P. lateralis*
- Multiple hosts, generalists: *P. cinnamomi* (3000 hosts!), *P. ramorum* (> 100). The evolution of extreme polyphagy is a stunning trait, really unique to this genus among pathogenic microbes. It implies the ability to overcome host-specific defenses that are wildly different

***Phytophthora* Genome Sequences Uncover Evolutionary Origins and Mechanisms of Pathogenesis**

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Draft genome sequences have been determined for the soybean pathogen *Phytophthora sojae* and the sudden oak death pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*. Oömycetes such as these *Phytophthora* species share the kingdom Stramenopila with photosynthetic algae such as diatoms, and the presence of many *Phytophthora* genes of probable phototroph origin supports a photosynthetic ancestry for the stramenopiles. Comparison of the two species' genomes reveals a rapid expansion and diversification of many protein families associated with plant infection such as hydrolases, ABC transporters, protein toxins, proteinase inhibitors, and, in particular, a superfamily of 700 proteins with similarity to known oömycete avirulence genes.

Single vs. multiple hosts

- Single-host species can spread more efficiently, depending on abundance and distribution of host
- Multi-host species may spread more slowly because not all hosts sporulate or because of different susceptibility among hosts (dilution effect)
- In the case of generalists it is important to understand susceptibility and infectiousness of each host

Generalist Phytophthoras

- Represent a challenge for modern society. How do you regulate 3000 host species? *P. ramorum* first generalist to be regulated, but current regulations probably are not sustainable in the long time
- Need to understand different role played by different hosts, and prioritize

Confirmed Susceptible Species

Andrew's clintonia bead lily

Ardisia

Bearberry

Bigleaf maple

Blueblossom

California bay laurel

California black oak

California buckeye

California coffeeberry

California hazelnut

California honeysuckle

California maidenhair fern

California nutmeg

California wood fern

Camellia species

Camphor tree

Canyon live oak

Cascara

Chinese witchhazel

Chinese guger tree

Coast live oak

Coast redwood

Dogwood species

Douglas fir

Eastern Joy Lotus Tree

European ash

European turkey oak

European yew

Evergreen huckleberry

Evergreen maple

False Solomon's seal

Formosa firethorn

Fetterbush

Goat willow

Grand fir

Griselinia

Holly

Holly olive

Holm oak

Horse chestnut

Hybrid witchhazel

Japanese evergreen oak

Laurustinus

Leucothoe species

Lilac

Loropetalum species

Madrone

Magnolia varieties

Manzanita

Michelia

Mountain laurel

Myrtle-leaved Distylium

Northern red oak

Oleander

Oregon ash

Oregon grape

Osmanthus

Pacific yew

Persian ironwood

Pieris varieties

Planetree maple

Poison oak

Prunus species

Red fir

Red lotus tree

Red tip photinia

Redwood ivy

Rhododendron species

Roble beech

Rosa species & hybrids

Rugosa rose

Salal

Salmonberry

Scotch heather

Scribbly gum

Sessile oak

Sheep laurel

Shreve's oak

Southern red oak

Spicebush

Spike witch hazel

Spreading euonymus

Star magnolia

Strawberry tree

Striped bark maple

Sweet bay laurel

Sweet chestnut

Sweet Cicely

Sweet olive

Tanoak

Toyon

Viburnum varieties

Victorian box

Vine maple

**Western maidenhair
fern**

Western starflower

White fir

Winter's bark

Witch hazel

Wood rose

Yew



Umbellularia



Douglas-fir



Buckeye



redwoods

Bay/Oak association

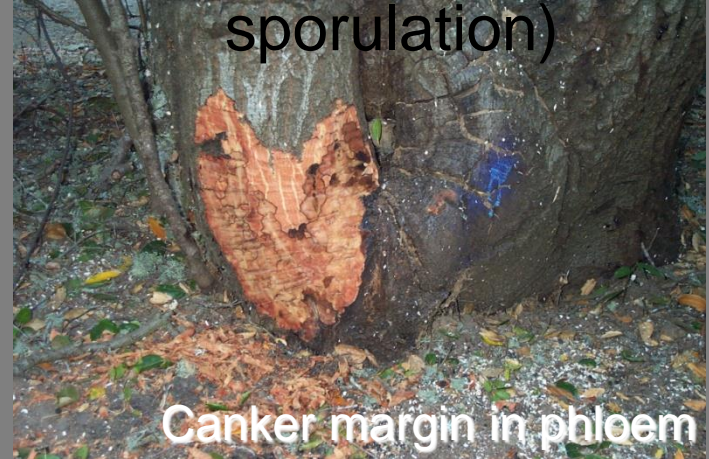
Bay Yearly



Sporangia



Coast Live Oak (no sporulation)



Canker margin in phloem



Bleeding canker

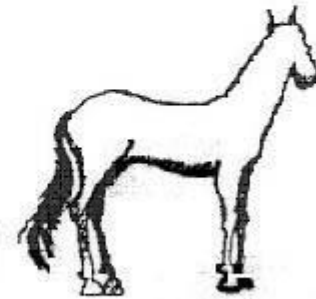
Wave years

Soil

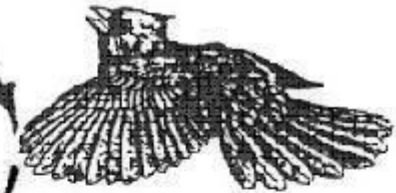
Life Cycle of the West Nile Virus

SUMMER

Warm, wet weather produces large mosquito populations



Dead-end hosts



Some birds die

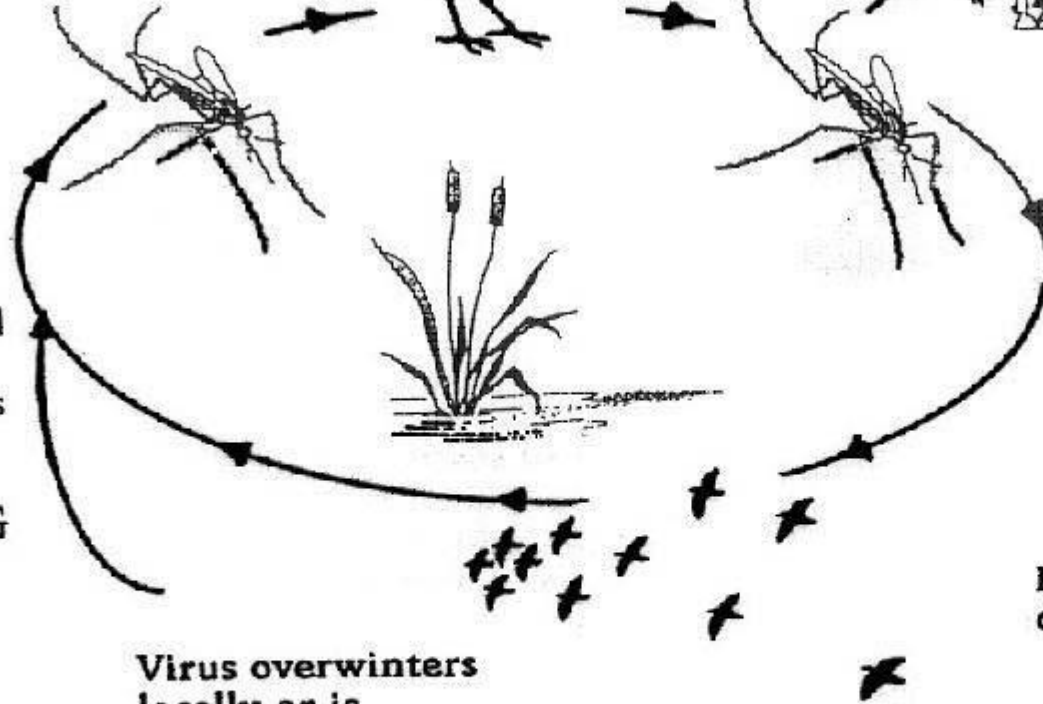
FALL

Mosquito populations decline, birds migrate

Virus amplified among birds and mosquitoes

SPRING

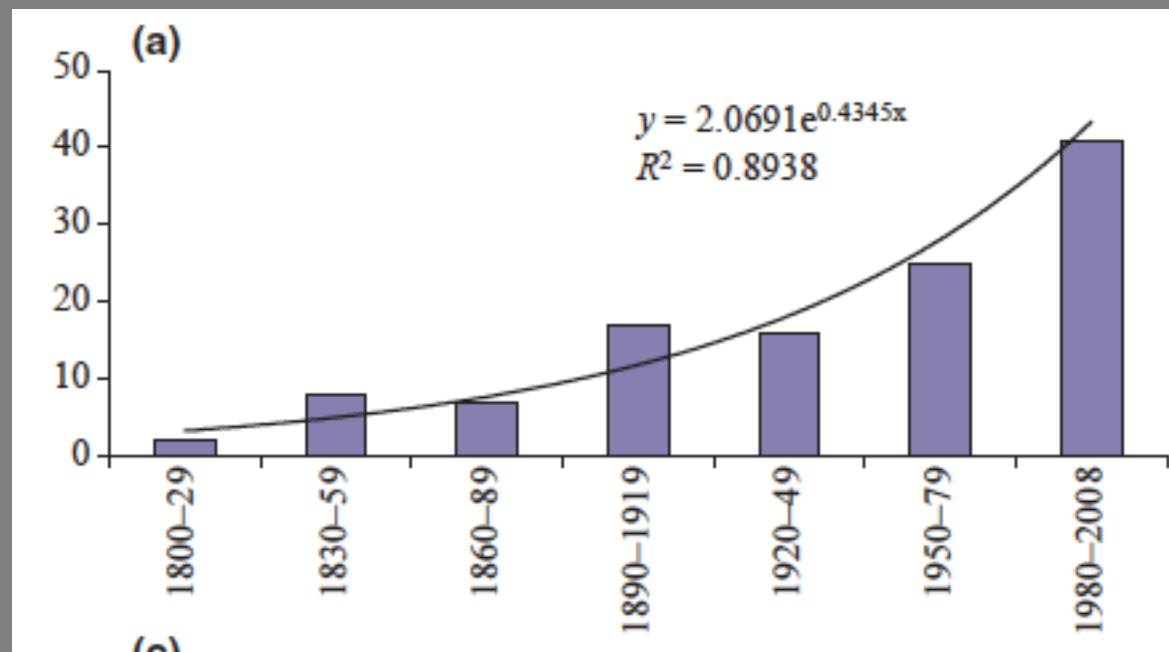
Virus overwinters locally or is reintroduced



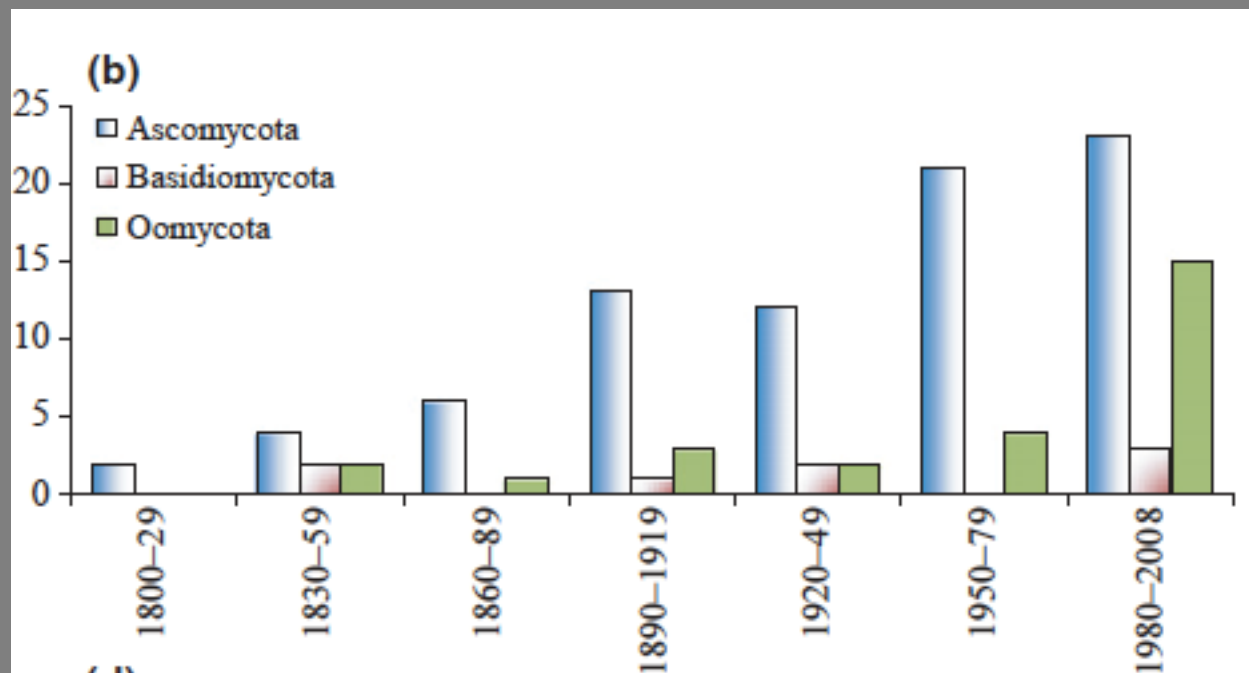


Biogeographical patterns and determinants of invasion by forest pathogens in Europe

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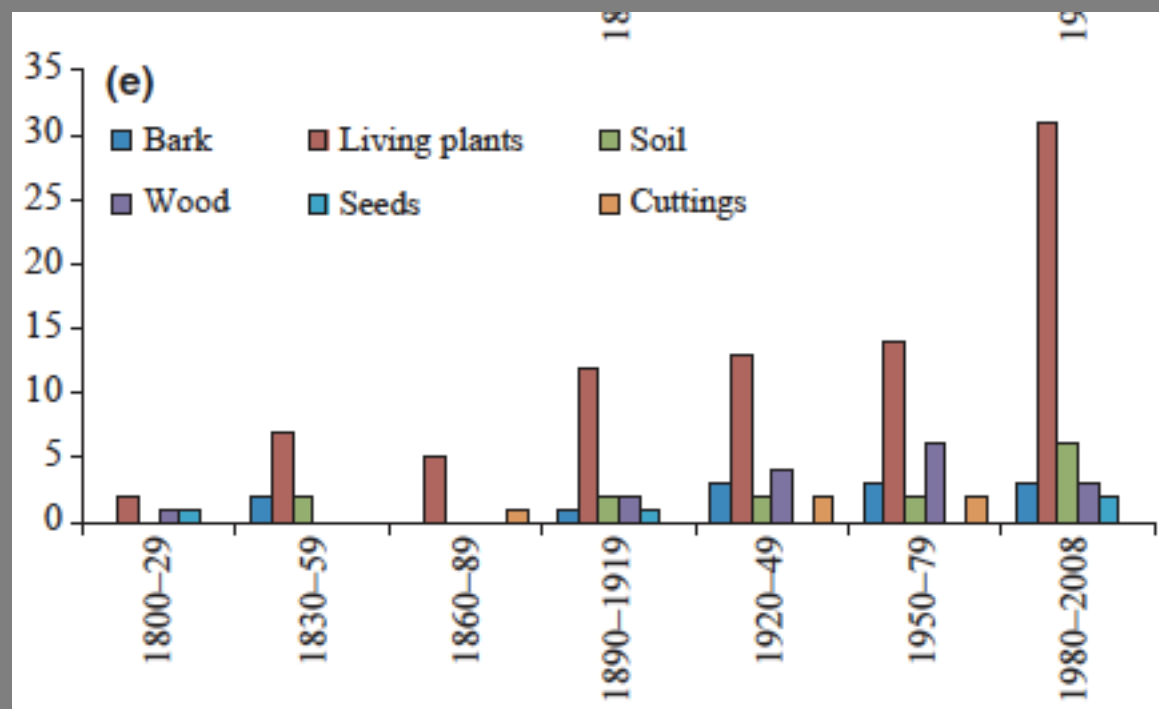


Number of Invasive Forest Pathogens



← Type of IFP

Pathway of introduction
Of IFP →



Host species x pathogen genotype

- Diversity within a species of a pathogen and different epidemiological role of different hosts are key elements to be considered

Lineage, Temperature, and Host Species have Interacting Effects on Lesion Development in *Phytophthora ramorum*

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Effect of variability within pathogen

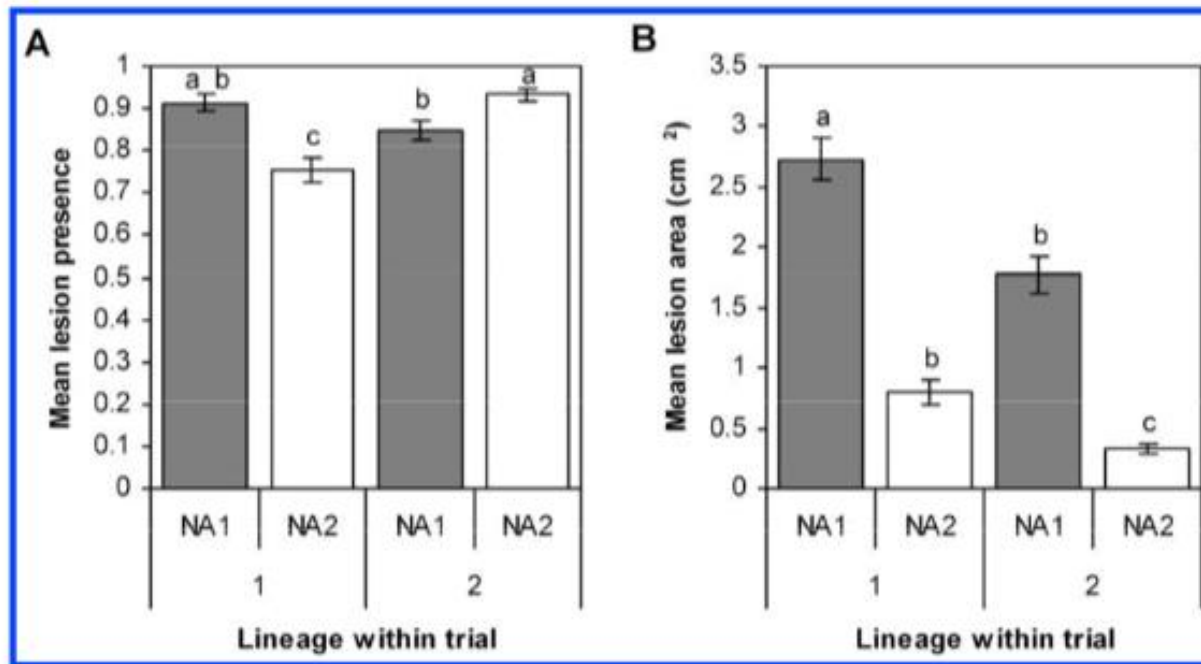


Fig. 3. Camellia detached-leaf zoospore inoculation assay testing lineages NA1 and NA2 in two trials (1 and 2). **A**, Frequency of lesion presence and **B**, mean lesion area (in square centimeters). Error bars are \pm standard error of the mean. Different letters above bars in each plot indicate statistical difference (Tukey-Kramer honestly significant difference, $P < 0.05$).

Two different lineages of *Phytophthora ramorum* cause a disease of different severity on the same host

Host x Lineage x Temperature!

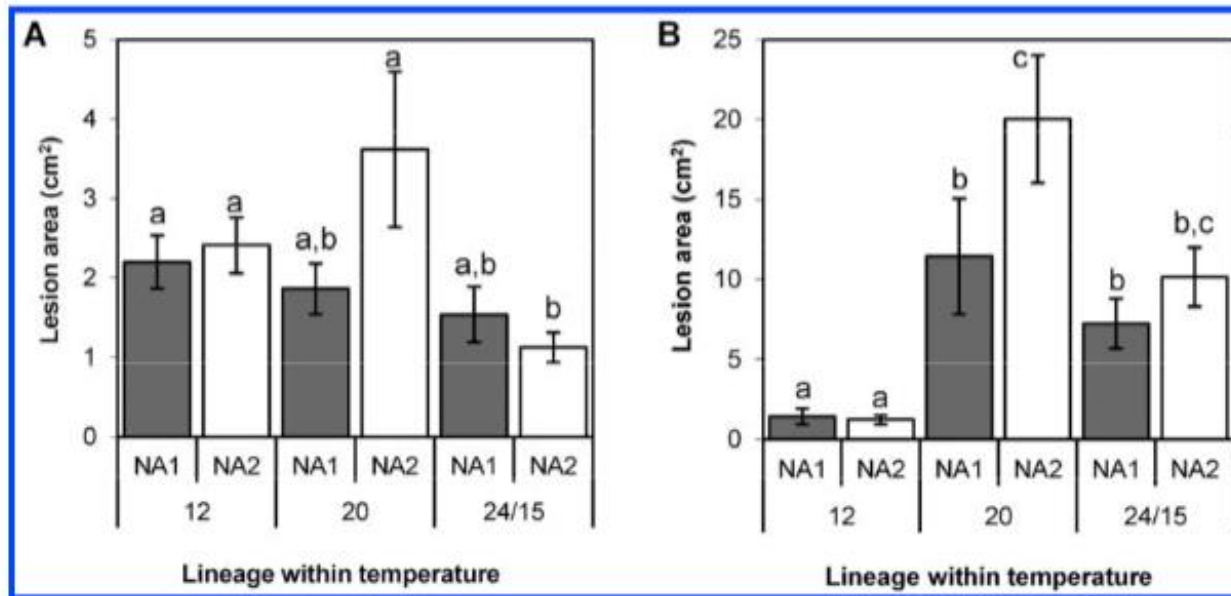


Fig. 6. Mean lesion area (in square centimeters) caused by zoospore suspensions of *Phytophthora ramorum* lineages NA1 and NA2 under three incubation conditions on leaves of **A**, bay laurel and **B**, 'Cunningham's White' rhododendron. Bars marked with different letters are significantly different at $P < 0.05$ by Tukey-Kramer's honestly significant difference. Error bars are \pm standard error of the mean.

- Bays and Rhododendrons respond differently: bays remain very susceptible at low temperatures, not so for rhododendrons. This has implications for disease spread in colder climates
- At intermediate temperatures, NA2 is more aggressive

Oak root canker

(*Phytophthora cinnamomi*)

- Species originally from PNG/Borneo/Sumatra, a common agricultural pathogen
- Soilborne, waterborne common in the wild in other parts of the US
- If host not extremely susceptible, predisposing factors needed for mortality to occur (e.g. oaks in Southern Europe)
 - Dry spell
 - Man-induced ecological alterations



P. cinnamomi causes
Littleleaf disease of pines
on former-agricultural
soils with hardpan in
the Eastern US

Problem: Oak decline

Locations:

Del Dios Area (Lake Hodges)

County Parks

Rural Areas









Oak Tree Survey at Del Dios

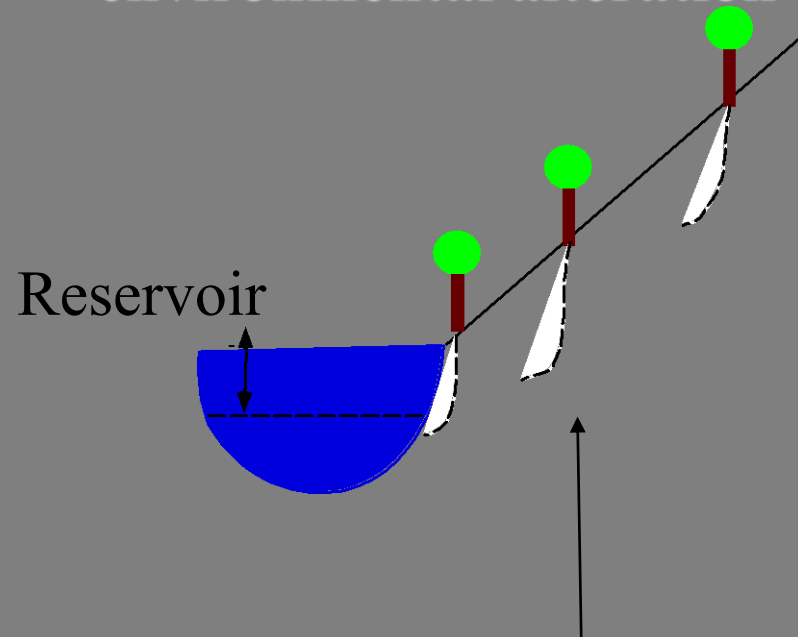
Results:

Of 474 *Quercus agrifolia* trees,
27% had bleeding cankers on the trunk.

Of 86 *Quercus engelmannii* trees,
none showed bleeding.

Example of man-induced environmental alteration

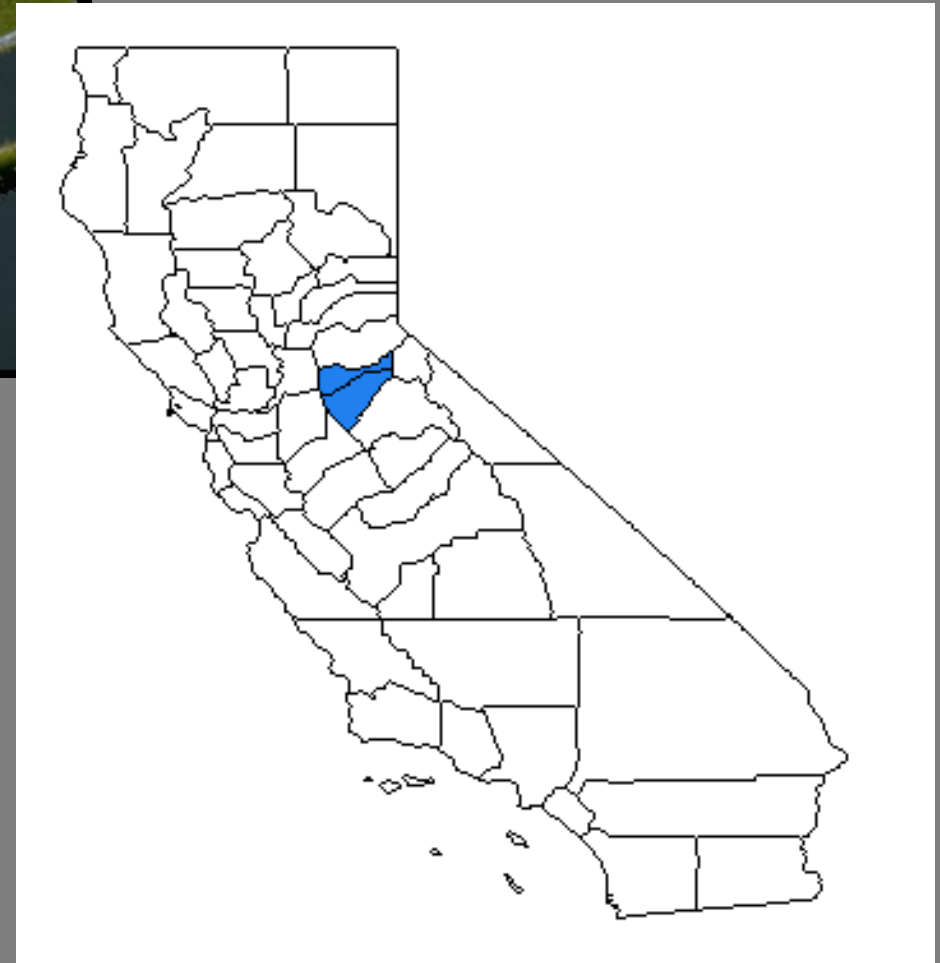
Phytophthora cinnamomi
Introduced on
Coast Live Oak
San Diego Co.



Oaks at mid-slope experience fluctuations in the water table level: if infected by *P. cinnamomi* become extremely weak and attractive to insects



Ione manzanita: endangered species



Ione

Extremely harsh ecosystems,
serpentine soil (very acidic,
rich in Fe^{++}), mining
operations



Two major components of plant cover are manzanitas:

A. viscida (white manzanita)

A. myrtifolia (ione manzanita)

Ione manzanita is a rare endemic species of the Ione area, one that has well adapted to the local conditions, but it is currently in the list of US threatened species



Because of almost total susceptibility to soilborne *P. cinnamomi*



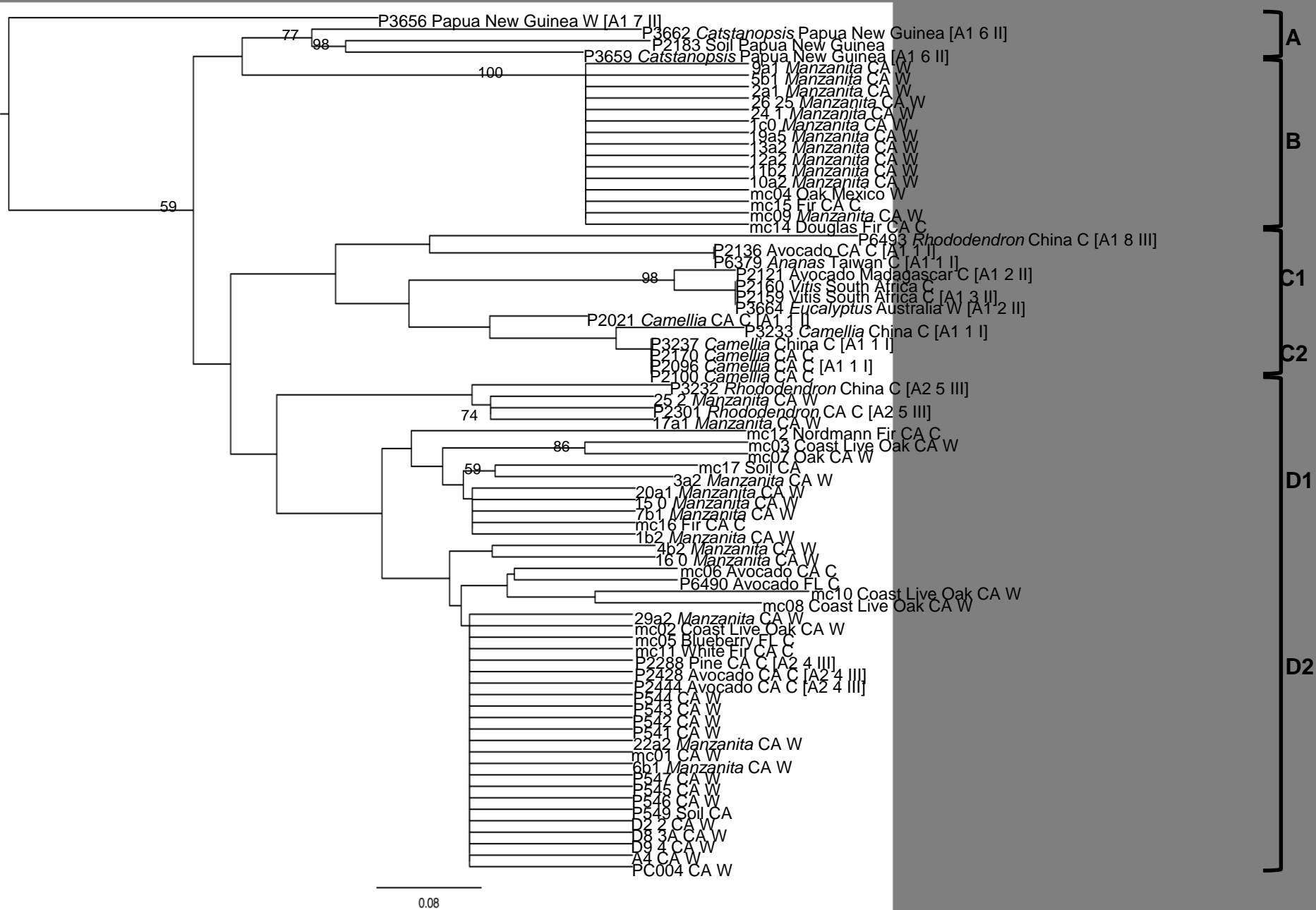
Genetic diversity of Pc in Ione is staggering, it includes all of the diversity present in California natural ecosystems





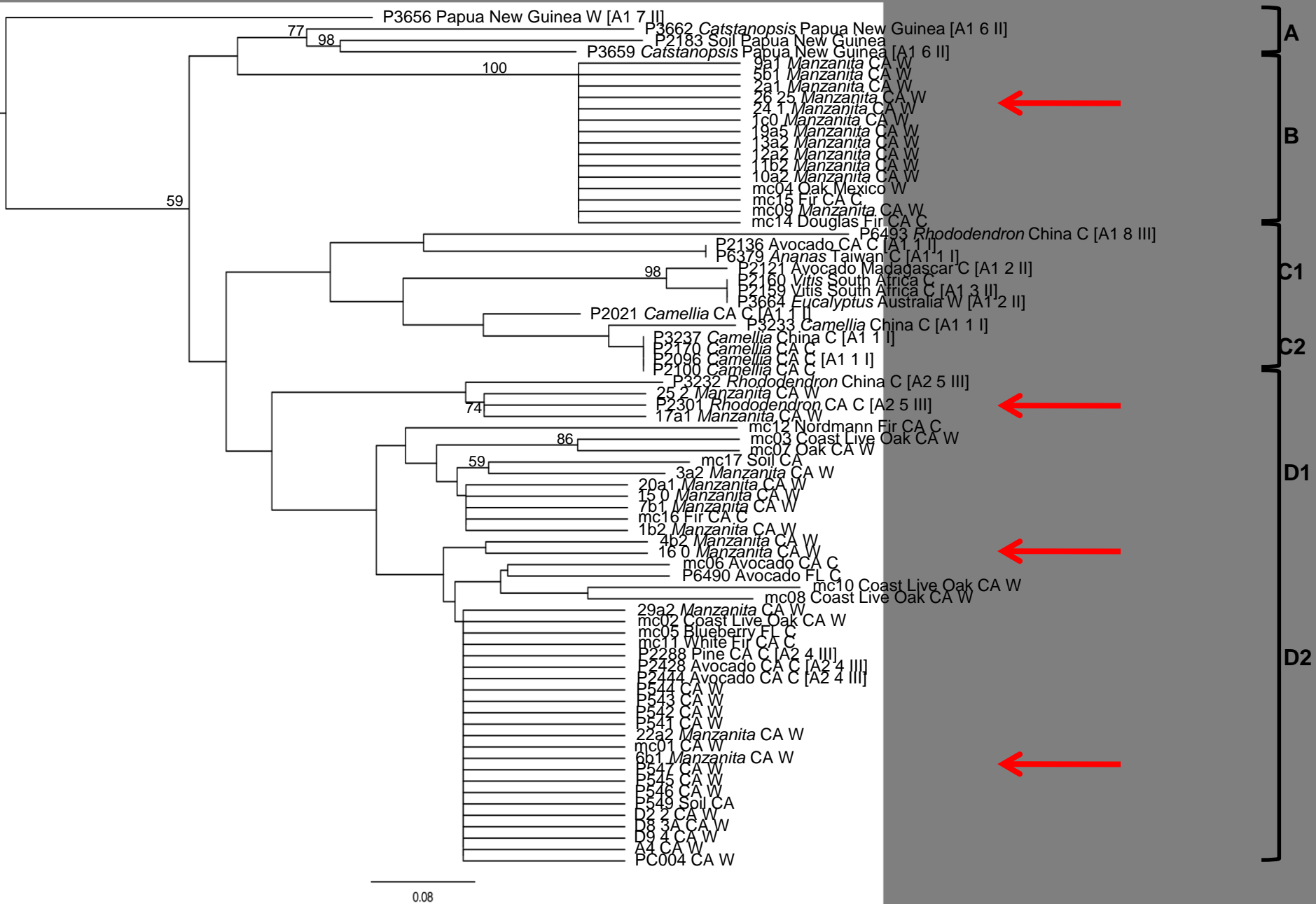
How can we explain this diversity?

- At least four introductions of four distinct strains
- Populations large enough that additional diversity generated locally (soil environment favorable to pathogen)
- One dominant strain is also present in Ca Christmas tree farms also matching a strain from a severe outbreak of oak mortality in Colima. This strain is novel



0.08

Manzanita



How can we explain such a severe effect on manzanita spp.?

- Host is very susceptible
- Multiple lineages of the pathogen were introduced. Because lineages are different there is synergism resulting in higher infection levels
- One lineage is novel and it has been reported in a serious outbreak in Colima, Mexico, in new outbreaks in Christmas tree farms in California and in Ione