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Special Focus: Beneficial roles silicon plays in agriculture

Editorial — Beneficial roles silicon plays in agriculture 2137
LIANG Yong-chao

Silicon acquisition and accumulation in plant and its significance for agriculture 2138
YAN Guo-chao, MIROSLAV Nikolic, YE Mu-jun, XIAO Zhuo-xi, LIANG Yong-chao

Beneficial effects of silicon on photosynthesis of tomato seedlings under water stress 2151
ZHANG Yi, SHI Yu, GONG Hai-jun, ZHAO Hai-liang, LI Huan-li, HU Yan-hong, WANG Yi-chao

Physiological response and phenolic metabolism in tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) mediated by silicon under *Ralstonia solanacearum* infection 2160
FAN Xue-ying, LIN Wei-peng, LIU Rui, JIANG Ni-hao, CAI Kun-zheng

Effects of silicon amendment on the occurrence of rice insect pests and diseases in a field test 2172
HAN Yong-qiang, WEN Ji-hui, PENG Zhao-pu, ZHANG De-yong, HOU Mao-lin

Impacts of silicon on biogeochemical cycles of carbon and nutrients in croplands 2182
LI Zi-chuan, SONG Zhao-liang, YANG Xiao-min, SONG A-lin, YU Chang-xun, WANG Tao, XIA Shao-pan, LIANG Yong-chao

Crop Science

Rapid and convenient transformation of cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum* L.) using *in planta* shoot apex via glyphosate selection 2196
GUO Wen-fang, Kevin Yueju Wang, WANG Nan, LI Jun, LI Gang-qiang, LIU De-hu

Overexpression of *AmDUF1517* enhanced tolerance to salinity, drought, and cold stress in transgenic cotton 2204
HAO Yu-qiong, LU Guo-qing, WANG Li-hua, WANG Chun-ling, GUO Hui-ming, LI Yi-fei, CHENG Hong-mei

Advances in salinity tolerance of soybean: Genetic diversity, heredity, and gene identification contribute to improving salinity tolerance 2215
CHEN Hua-tao, LIU Xiao-qing, ZHANG Hong-mei, YUAN Xing-xing, GU He-ping, CUI Xiao-yan, CHEN Xin





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Effects of slow or controlled release fertilizer types and fertilization modes on yield and quality of rice 2222

WEI Hai-yan, CHEN Zhi-feng, XING Zhi-peng, ZHOU Lei, LIU Qiu-yuan, ZHANG Zhen-zhen, JIANG Yan, HU Ya-jie, ZHU Jin-yan, CUI Pei-yuan, DAI Qi-gen, ZHANG Hong-cheng

Evaluation and analysis of intraspecific competition in maize: A case study on plant density experiment 2235

ZHAI Li-chao, XIE Rui-zhi, MING Bo, LI Shao-kun, MA Da-ling

Horticulture

Supplemental blue light increases growth and quality of greenhouse pak choy depending on cultivar and supplemental light intensity 2245

ZHENG Yin-jian, ZHANG Yi-ting, LIU Hou-cheng, LI Ya-min, LIU Ying-liang, HAO Yan-wei, LEI Bing-fu

Exogenous GSH protects tomatoes against salt stress by modulating photosystem II efficiency, absorbed light allocation and H₂O₂-scavenging system in chloroplasts 2257

ZHOU Yan, DIAO Ming, CUI Jin-xia, CHEN Xian-jun, WEN Ze-lin, ZHANG Jian-wei, LIU Hui-ying

Endogenous nitric oxide and hydrogen peroxide detection in indole-3-butyric acid-induced adventitious root formation in *Camellia sinensis* 2273

WEI Kang, WANG Li-yuan, RUAN Li, ZHANG Cheng-cai, WU Li-yun, LI Hai-lin, CHENG Hao

Plant Protection

Identification, characterization and full-length sequence analysis of a novel endornavirus in common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus* L.) 2281

LIU Wen-wen, XIN Min, CAO Meng-ji, QIN Meng, LIU Hui, ZHAO Shou-qj, WANG Xi-feng

Genetic diversity and population structure of *Commelina communis* in China based on simple sequence repeat markers 2292

YANG Juan, YU Hai-yan, LI Xiang-ju, DONG Jin-gao

Identifying glyphosate-tolerant maize by soaking seeds in glyphosate solution 2302

YAN Shu-feng, Sher Muhammad, LIU Hai-fang, TIE Shuang-gui, SUN Shu-ku

Molecular identification and enzymatic properties of laccase2 from the diamondback moth *Plutella xylostella* (Lepidoptera: Plutellidae) 2310

LIU Zhen-gang, WANG Huan-huan, XUE Chao-bin

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Animal Science • Veterinary Medicine

Beneficial role of melatonin in protecting mammalian gametes and embryos from oxidative damage 2320

PANG Yun-wei, JIANG Xiao-long, ZHAO Shan-jiang, HUANG Zi-qiang, ZHU Hua-bin



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Effects of lairage after transport on post mortem muscle glycolysis, protein phosphorylation and lamb meat quality 2336

LI Xin, XIA An-qí, CHEN Li-juan, DU Man-ting, CHEN Li, KANG Ning, ZHANG De-quan

Agricultural Economics and Management

Determinants of cooperative pig farmers' safe production behaviour in China—Evidences from perspective of cooperatives' services 2345

Ji Chen, CHEN Qin, Jacques Trienekens, WANG Hai-tao

The trade margins of Chinese agricultural exports to ASEAN and their determinants 2356

SUN Zhi-lu, LI Xian-de

COVER



Silicon is a beneficial element for the healthy growth and development of a wide range of plant species, especially under various forms of abiotic and biotic stress. All plants take up Si, but Si content ranges from *ca.* 0.1 to 10% (w/w), depending largely on plant species and external Si concentration. Rice is a typical Si-accumulator. If SiO₂ content in rice straw at mature stage is below 10%, Si deficiency symptoms such as willow-shaped leaf blades occur. Under Si deficiency, lodging and disease susceptibility increases in rice. *LSi1* (left) is a rice mutant defective in *LSi1* gene (Si influx) responsible for Si uptake and transport from solution to root cells. The Si content of the mutant is only about 10% that of its wide type (WT, right). The rice mutant is extremely low in biomass, fertility and yield with severe grain discoloration and disease infection as compared to its WT. Cover photos were provided by Prof. LIANG Yong-chao from College of Environmental and Resource Sciences, Zhejiang University, China. See pages 2138–2150 by Yan *et al.* for more details.