

Journal Flexibility in the Troubling Times of COVID-19

Dear authors, reviewers, and editors,

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, we, the Editors-in-Chief and publishers of multiple plant-focused journals, have had questions from members of our community about our flexibility in these troubled times. Like many of you, we and our colleagues on our editorial boards are also facing serious issues in life and work due to COVID-19. Work-related issues include the time we are spending on things like contingency planning for lab shutdowns or dealing with those shutdowns after they were imposed while shifting roles among lab members to keep important plants or cultures alive. Many of us are also having to convert classes to online instruction, dealing with major changes in work-life balance (kids out of school), and even illness.

Please note that we are flexible about deadlines and we can provide “no-excuse” extensions—that is, if you ask for an extension on a journal-related task, we will do our best to accommodate this request.

For revisions to your manuscripts that were already reviewed, we assume that you are likely to want to have your paper resubmitted as soon as you can manage it. Therefore, the resubmission can wait until your lab is capable of working again. We pledge to handle your resubmission as quickly as possible, even though our colleagues on our editorial boards are facing the same challenges as our entire community.

We understand, too, that reviewers may need extra time to complete their assessments of manuscripts, and we will do our best to accommodate such needs. We cannot grant open-ended review extensions, but we can be understanding and flexible about the added time you may need to complete your review. In addition, we recognize that, due to circumstances beyond your control, you may be unable to respond to our reminders or requests, and ultimately perhaps cannot deliver a review, despite your best intentions. In these cases, we may have to ask our authors to be patient if it takes longer than anticipated to return decisions and reviews. We do ask that if at all possible, you keep in communication with us about what you can and cannot

accomplish in a given period of time, so that we may adjust accordingly. We are confident that the community as a whole will recognize the extreme nature of the situation and the need to come together to help our colleagues and peers to the best of our collective ability.

Thank you for your understanding, and we wish safety and health to everyone.

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