

Dr. Matt Kasson

Dr. Matt Kasson is an Associate Professor of Mycology and Forest Pathology in the Division of Plant and Soil Sciences at West Virginia University, in Morgantown, West Virginia. From 2017-2022, he served as Director of INVAM, the world's largest collection of *Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi*, following the retirement of long-time curator and director Dr. Joe Morton. Dr. Kasson received his PhD in 2012 from the Department of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology at The Pennsylvania State University, under the direction of forest pathologist Dr. Don Davis. Dr. Dave Geiser, who also served on Kasson's committee, provided considerable mentorship, overseeing his dissertation work on *Fusarium mutualists* of ambrosia beetles. Kasson also received a B.S. in Forest Ecosystem Science in 2005 and an M.S in Forestry in 2007 from The University of Maine where he studied under forest pathologist Dr. Bill Livingston. Kasson conducted postdoctoral research at Virginia Tech under the direction of Dr. Gary Griffin from 2012-2014, before accepting his current faculty position in July 2014. His awards include being named a 2021-22 National Geographic Explorer as well as numerous WVU awards including 2021 WVU-wide Distinction in Mentoring Undergraduates in Research, 2016 & 2021 PSS Researcher of the Year, 2020 & 2021 PSS Service of the Year, 2021 Davis College Service of the Year, and 2018 Gamma Sigma Delta Junior Faculty Award of Merit.

Kasson's lab currently includes three PhD students, two M.S. students, two technicians and numerous undergraduates. From 2014-2022, 4 additional PhD students and 6 M.S. students completed their graduate studies under his supervision. During that same period of time has also mentored three post-doctoral researchers. Since 2014, Kasson has received multiple grants from the USDA including grants from APHIS, USFS, and AMS. He also received grants from NSF, CTPB and The Ohrstrom Foundation totaling *ca.* $1.5 million dollars. Kasson currently has 54 publications in diverse plant pathology and mycology journals (including nine papers in *Mycologia*). His first first-author publication was published in Mycologia in 2009. Kasson has incredibly diverse interests and research projects in the broad area of fungal ecology. His research program ranges from plant pathology focused studies on etiology of fungal canker diseases of trees, fungal biocontrol, and tripartite interactions between ambrosia beetles, their fungal partners, and their plant hosts to mycology focused studies on biology of entomopathogenic fungi and fungal biodiversity discovery and analysis in fungus- feeding millipedes. Kasson's biggest mycology contributions are in the area of fungus-arthropod interactions working on deciphering the various roles fungi play in their interactions with cicadas, ambrosia beetles, and millipedes among others. His lab's work on describing the fungal communities of fungus-feeding millipedes represents the first published work on this topic. With his strong grounding in organismal mycology and forest pathology, and his skills in phylogenetics, metabolomics, finding weird and rare fungi, and performing diverse functional bioassays, Kasson wears the hat of a modern integrative fungal ecologist.

In addition to research, Kasson is a vocal advocate for Science Communication and Outreach, DEI, and Mental Health. He regularly communicates on these topics on Twitter to some 14,000+ followers and has published editorials in venues such as The Conversation and Nature Careers. His lab's work and advocacy has been featured numerous times in The New York Times, The Atlantic, NPR, Scientific American, and The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, and in podcasts including NPR's Short Wave, Science Vs, Overheard at National Geographic, Joyful Microbe, Fungi Town, The Mushroom Hour Podcast, and The American Phytopathological Society's Plantopia. He hopes to continue this work as he feels research and advocacy are both equally important for advancing our profession.