

Forward

The 34th Southern Forest Tree Improvement Conference (SFTIC), marking 66 years of biennial technical conferences, was held June 19-21, 2017 in sunny Melbourne Beach, FL at the Crowne Plaza Oceanfront hotel. The conference theme was “Applying genetics and genomics to accelerate breeding, enhance genetic gain and improve adaptation”. There were 83 colleagues (13 students) attending the conference from 4 countries, 16 US states and 29 different organizations (14 universities, 8 companies and 7 government agencies).

The UF/IFAS School of Forest Resources and Conservation and the Cooperative Forest Genetics Research Program, in cooperation with the Southern Forest Tree Improvement Committee, was proud to host the 34th SFTIC and thank all presenters and attendees for their excellent presentations and discussions (see list of participant), the financial sponsors who without their generous support this conference would not be possible (see list of sponsors) and the University of Florida/IFAS Office of Conferences and Institutes for their detailed planning and organization of this conference!

The following awards were presented to individuals for their outstanding contribution to the 2017 SFTIC conference. All winners received a cash award and certificate signed by the 2017 SFTIC chairman, Josh Adams.

In honor of **Dr. Bruce Zobel** a \$300 cash prize and signed certificate was awarded for best oral student presentation based on content, style and use of visuals. This year’s winner was **Austin Heine** for his presentation on “Pollination Bag Type Impacts Cone Survival and Seed Yield for Mass Production of Control Cross Seed in Loblolly Pine”.

In honor of **Dr. Tony Squillace** a \$300 cash prize and signed certificate was awarded for best oral student or non-student presentation (excluding invited presentation) based on content, style and use of visuals. This year’s winner was **Donghwan Shim** for his presentation on “De Novo Assembly of Transcriptome and Identification of Transcriptional Network that Leads to Enhanced Strobilus Production by Branch Girdling in *Larix Kaempferi*”.

There were three awards for best student poster presentation based on content, clarity, organization and visual appeal. The **first place, Belle Baruch Institute Poster Award**, \$200 cash prize was awarded to **Andrew Sims** for his presentation on “A Proposed Study on the Genetic Control of Fertilizer Response and Post-Senescence Nutrient Content Assessed via Foliar Sampling in Loblolly Pine”. The **second place, Hans van Buijtenen Poster Award**, \$150 cash prize was awarded to **Rachel Landham** for her presentation on “Effects of Thinning Regimes on Genetic Variation of White Oak (*Quercus alba* L.) in Eastern Hardwood Forests”. The **third place, Hans van Buijtenen Poster Award**, \$100 cash prize was awarded to **Ki-Won Kim** for his presentation on “Genetic Diversity and Clone Structure of the Endangered Species of *Thuja koraiensis*: Conservation Strategy in Response to Climate Change”.