

FowiTa 2023 at TUD: German Forest Science Prize of EUR 50,000 awarded to Junior Professor Kathrin Blumenstein

The 2023 German Forest Science Prize has been awarded to Junior Professor Kathrin Blumenstein for her outstanding research in improving the understanding of the interactions between host tree, harmful organism and microbiota. “Through her scientific work, Kathrin Blumenstein is contributing to the development of targeted measures to strengthen the defense mechanisms of trees. She is making a significant contribution both to increasing the resistance of trees and to advancing the field of forest pathology,” the Board of Trustees said when explaining its decision.

Prof. Peter Krebs, Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences at TUD Dresden University of Technology, Prof. Karsten Kalbitz, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and Robert Mayr, Chairperson of the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation, presented the prize to Kathrin Blumenstein, who is Junior Professor and Chair of Tree Pathology at the Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg, during the Forest Science Conference 2023 at TU Dresden.

Robert Mayr emphasizes the significance of the award, which has increased further: "As of this year, the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation is awarding the Forest Science Prize endowed with up to EUR 50,000. This sum is made up of EUR 15,000, which, as in the past, the prize winners will receive as personal prize money for their exceptional research. In addition, we have invited Jun.-Prof. Blumenstein to apply for funding for a research project of up to EUR 35,000. “We hope this will give her an additional boost for her scientific work.” Kathrin Blumenstein's project proposal for an “Investigation of novel opportunistic pest pathogens in urban trees and forests” convinced the prize committee and successfully attracted the funding.

“The German Forest Science Prize signifies great recognition for my research in forest pathology,” the laureate said, expressing her gratitude: “The prize will motivate me and encourage me to continue pursuing my research with great commitment. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Robert Mayr, the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation and the award committee. I am delighted about the highly endowed prize money, especially for the proposed project. At the same time, receiving the award is a wonderful opportunity to bring my field, forest pathology, more into the focus of forest sciences in Germany.”

Jun.-Prof. Kathrin Blumenstein focuses on the study of pathological fungi in her research. These are spreading more and more due to climate change and are attacking

forest and urban trees stressed by drought at an ever-increasing rate. Blumenstein's focus is on strengthening the natural resilience of host trees under changing climatic conditions. Critical parts of her work include exploring the interactions of beneficial and harmful fungi among each other and with their host tree, as well as tracking their dispersal routes. The development of efficient, preventive measures, such as the increased use of biological control measures and other developed diagnostic methods, including at the molecular genetic level, aim to contribute to the containment of such pathogens in the future.

The German Forest Science Award, endowed by the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation, is the most highly endowed forest science award in the German-speaking world. It has been awarded every two years since 2000 by the four forestry faculties in Germany, together with the Foundation, as part of the Forest Science Conference. The award committee consists of Prof. Christian Ammer (University of Göttingen), Prof. Jürgen Bauhus (University of Freiburg), Prof. Karsten Kalbitz (TU Dresden), Prof. Annette Menzel (TU Munich) and Robert Mayr, Founder and Chairperson of the Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation. The award is given to younger scientists who have made outstanding achievements in the field of forest sciences. A new feature this year is the opportunity to receive funding for a research project of up to EUR 35,000 in addition to the personal prize money of EUR 15,000.

Foundation profile

The Eva Mayr-Stihl Foundation is an independent, non-profit foundation. It was established in 1986 by Eva Mayr-Stihl and Robert Mayr. The foundation's work focuses on science and research, medicine, and art and culture.

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