

# **JIPB Editor's Handbook**

**JIPB Editorial Office**  
**[www.JIPB.net](http://www.JIPB.net)**

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## **Introduction to JIPB**

### **1.1 Brief background**

The Journal of Integrative Plant Biology (JIPB), an international journal published by Wiley and sponsored by the Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Botanical Society of China, was originally established in 1952 as *Acta Botanica Sinica*. In 2005, the name was changed to JIPB, and since 2007 the journal has changed its focus to publish only those articles that are able to answer fundamental plant biological questions. For the last 5 years the journal has been ranked in the top-10 scientific journal in China across all disciplines.

JIPB is running completely by a team of 67 board members, two Co-Editor-in-Chiefs (CEICs), eight Senior Editors (SEs) and fifty-seven Editors, from 15 different countries. The Editorial Board is responsible for handling manuscripts, organizing special issues, making major decisions and recruiting new board members. The journal is also supported by 4 full-time Editorial Office staff. All accepted manuscripts are transferred to Wiley for language polishing and typesetting. All published articles since 1952 are accessible online at [www.jipb.net](http://www.jipb.net).

JIPB is currently accessible in 15,800 institutions worldwide and indexed by 67 databases, including PubMed, SCI, CAB and Google Scholar. The yearly full-text downloads have been increasing from 30,000 in 2007 to 260,000 in 2013, and JIPB's 2-year SCI impact factor has grown from 0.859 in 2008 to 3.962 in 2016.

JIPB makes every possible effort to process manuscripts in a timely manner, and the average time from submission to online publication is 56 days. We use the ScholarOne system developed by Thomson Reuters for manuscript handling.

### **1.2 Aim and scope**

JIPB reports novel scientific discoveries related to any aspects of plant biology, preferably but not exclusively using integrative genetic, genomic, biochemical, and systems biology approaches. The journal aims to foster communication and

discussion among scientists in different areas of plant and agricultural sciences. Articles published in JIPB shall be of general interest and provide answers to fundamental plant biological questions. Important new technologies that can potentially be used to elucidate general plant biology questions may also be considered. Preliminary observations, purely descriptive studies, omics-studies without functional validations, tissue culture and transformation works fall beyond the scope of the journal. Articles submitted to JIPB should fit into one of the 9 themes:

- Cell and Developmental Biology;
- Functional Omics and Systems Biology;
- Metabolism and Biochemistry;
- Molecular Ecology and Evolution;
- Molecular Physiology;
- Photosynthesis and Crop Physiology;
- Plant-abiotic Interactions;
- Plant-pathogen Interactions;
- Plant Reproduction Biology.

Each theme is managed by an SE. Each year there are three or four special issues published on particular topics. All SEs and Editors are encouraged to propose ideas to CEICs for organizing special issues.

### **1.3 Manuscript categories**

All manuscripts submitted to JIPB shall follow the JIPB style (see [www.jipb.net/instructions.asp](http://www.jipb.net/instructions.asp)), be written in concise English, and be presented in a manner and at a level accessible to the broad readership of the journal, not just specialists. JIPB publishes manuscripts in six categories:

- 1) **Research articles** should address fundamental plant biological questions through reproducible experimental design and integrative approaches. There is no page limit but references are limit to 50. Supplemental information is allowed.
- 2) **Letters to the Editor** (LTEs) are short articles of original research with a high

degree of novelty, representing a breakthrough in understanding important biological processes of interest to a wide plant science audience. These rapid communications should have a brief and clear title with no more than 80 characters, and should have no subtitles. All LTEs shall start with a brief paragraph to provide the rationale of the work, followed by results and discussions, and then funding and acknowledgement. LTEs may have up to 3 print pages and 2 illustrations. Author information is listed before references (maximum 15). The text including essential materials and methods, figure legends and references should be limited to 1,600 words. Supplemental information is allowed.

- 3) **Review Articles (RAs)** are submitted to JIPB by editors' invitation and unsolicited authors, aiming to bring our readers critical and comprehensive knowledge in a selected area of plant biology. Established researchers with an interest to write an RA may contact a Senior Editor or an Editor within the immediate expertise area directly for consensus. All RAs should be written in an engaging manner, and be focused on exciting new development or new concepts. Authors may cite their own work if related, but such article should not be viewed as a place to promote one's own research. The use of figures and illustrations are encouraged as they add the readers' understanding of the subject. All RAs must pass through the regular review and revision process without guarantee of acceptance for publication. RAs will be published with a photograph of the corresponding author. There are no page and references limits. As an example, one RA written by Lucas and 15 co-authors (2013) as a "monograph" has more than 90 print pages.
- 4) **Commentaries** give authors an opportunity to exchange views, offer critical comments on certain topics, or on recently published articles in the plant community. Commentaries will appear at the beginning of the journal and will be published without abstract and keywords. Author information and references are presented after the text.
- 5) **New technologies** describe new and improved methods and research tools. Articles should provide a concise and comprehensive explanation on how novel technologies may be applied in plant research and should evaluate and compare older techniques and explain why the new method is more efficient,

cheaper, simpler, etc. Manuscripts in this category should contain an abstract, keywords and references as a standard article.

- 6) **New Resources** should describe major informational databases and genetic resources that are of value and interest to a wide plant science audience. Manuscripts reporting a major informational database should propose provocative new biological insights that can be derived from an analysis of the data set. New Resources articles follow the same format and length guidelines as Research Articles.

#### **1.4 Free Access policy**

JIPB is committed to reaching the largest possible audience. Our FreeAccess (FA) policies listed below allow readers to read and download our articles without subscription.

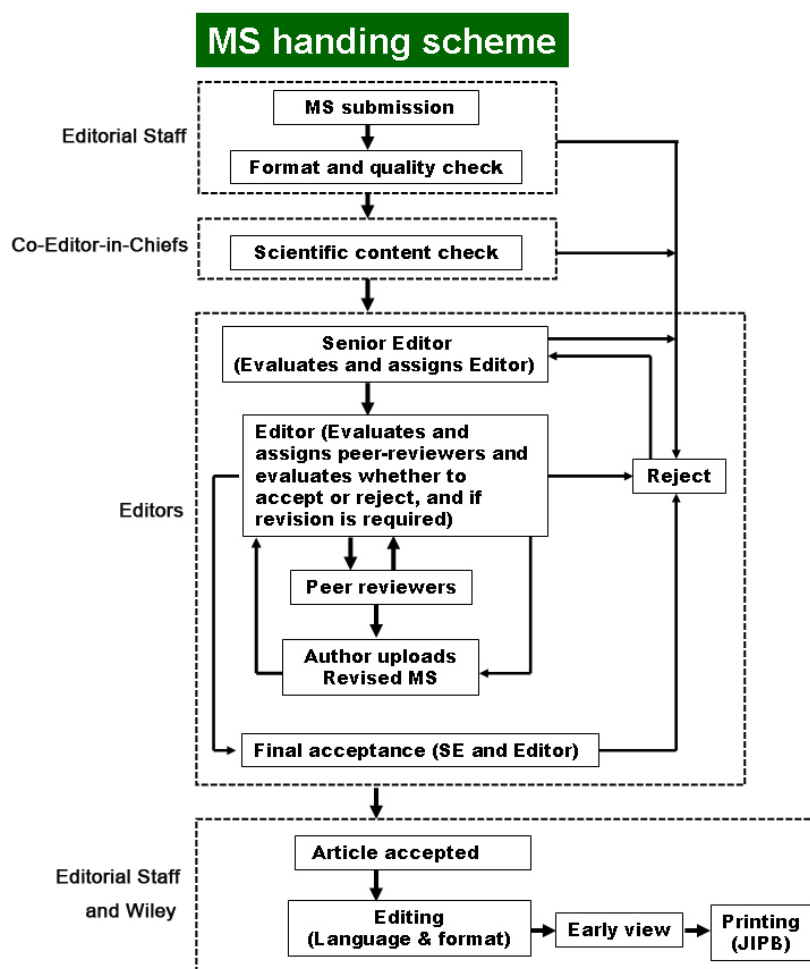
- All special issues;
- All letters to the editor, editorials and commentary articles;
- All articles are free for a month after publication;
- Two papers per issue chosen by the CEICs;
- Authors may pay for OpenAccess.

### **Manuscript Management**

#### **2.1 The ScholarOne system**

JIPB uses the ScholarOne™, a web-based manuscript submission and tracking system launched in the mid-1990s. All actions from authors, editors, reviewers and editorial staff are handled by the online system without risk of delay or breach of confidentiality. The ScholarOne system is designed to maximize flexibility for efficient manuscript handling. The system can be modified if necessary.

## 2.2 The journal workflow



## 2.3 The decision-making process

All submitted manuscripts are subjected to format and quality checks carried out by the Editorial Office. The check also includes plagiarism detection through iThenticate™. Manuscripts with severe problems in scope, novelty, format, language, data presentation or image quality will be rejected immediately without entering the manuscript processing chain.

Acceptable manuscripts are passed on to appropriate SE who will make an initial evaluation on the content (see 1.2 and 1.3 for details on journal scope and themes) and the language. Based on that, the SE will decide if the manuscript should enter the peer-review process. If yes, the SE will designate a suitable

Editor to handle the manuscript for peer-review.

The Editor will decide if the assigned manuscript is worthy for peer-review. If yes, he/she will assign reviewers and evaluate their comments, and make the decision accordingly. The Editor's decision will be passed to the SE who will make a final decision. Please note: All decisions made by Editors will be monitored by the responsible SE.

## **Roles of the Editors, Editorial Office and Publisher**

### **3.1 The role of the Co-Editor-in-Chiefs**

- Lead JIPB in becoming a top plant science journal;
- Manage the Editorial Board and the Editorial Office;
- Organize Editorial Board meetings to discuss the journal's policy and strategy;
- Make decisions if SE or Editor fails to make the decision in 7 days;
- Soliciting topics for special issues;
- Act as spokesperson to the governmental, publishing and funding agencies to ensure fiscal solvency;
- Assemble the Editorial Board;
- Select images for cover pictures.

### **Privileges**

- Has the right to select two papers per issue for FreeAccess;
- Choose articles for PubExpress (rapid publication channel);
- Receive both print and online access free of charge;
- Invite review articles (JIPB's invited expert reviews are by invitation only);
- Represent JIPB in official situations.

### **3.2 The role of the Senior Editors**

#### **Tasks**

- Fully responsible for the theme assigned;
- Evaluate manuscripts and reject directly if necessary;



- Invite review articles (JIPB's invited expert reviews are by invitation only);
- Organize special issues (each editor is expected to organize one during his/her term);
- Assign manuscripts to appropriate Editors, evaluate decisions made by Editors, and make the final decisions;
- Nominate new board members to the CEICs;
- Coach new Editors.

### **Privileges**

- Entitled to two free submissions every year including free color figures (excluding OpenAccess);
- Recommend articles to CEICs for PubExpress (rapid publication channel);
- Receive JIPB online access free of charge;
- Invite review articles (JIPB's invited expert reviews are by invitation only);
- Suggest new board members;
- Participate in JIPB Editorial Board meetings and other activities;
- Represent JIPB in official situations.

### **3.3 The role of the Editors**

#### **Tasks**

- Evaluate manuscripts and reject directly if necessary;
- Assign suitable peer-reviewers to the manuscript;
- Invite review articles (JIPB's invited expert reviews are by invitation only);
- Evaluate reviews' comments, and make decisions, together with clear instruction to authors (It is very important to realize that all decisions are made by Editor, not by counting reviewers' votes);
- Organize special issues (each editor is expected to organize at least one during his/her term);
- Nominate new board members to the CEICs.

#### **Privileges**

- Entitled to two free submissions every year, including free color figures;

- Recommend articles to CEICs for PubExpress (rapid publication channel);
- Invite review articles (all expert's reviews are invited only);
- Participate in JIPB Editorial Board meetings (once every two years, there will be one in July, 2017);
- Represent JIPB in official situations;
- Suggest new Editors and reviewers;
- Receive JIPB online content for free.

### **3.4 The role of Editorial Office Staff**

- Support the journal in every possible way to ensure a smooth communication flow among editors, reviewers and authors;
- Check figures, tables, language and format before passing to SE to enforce basic quality of submitted manuscript;
- Check each manuscript for potential plagiarism and ethical problems;
- Make every effort to reach an error-free publication (cross checking between two staff numbers for every manuscript);
- Head of the editorial office has the final responsibility for office activity;
- Ensure the whole manuscript handling process confidential;
- Updating online information timely;
- Promote JIPB in every possible way;
- Help to organize board meetings and other related meetings;
- Make the cover design for each issue.

### **3.5 The role of the Publisher**

- Perform language correction for every accepted manuscript in timely manner;
- Perform copy-editing and typesetting for all accepted manuscripts;
- Deliver online publication in a timely manner;
- Promote the journal and maximize the discoverability of the journal through
  - ✓ Search engine optimization
  - ✓ E-mail alerts and RSS feeds
  - ✓ Social networking
  - ✓ Journal landing page
  - ✓ Conference attendance
  - ✓ Access through the publisher's global sales network;

- Implement and maintain other publishing innovations, such as
  - ✓ Mobile phone apps
  - ✓ Enhanced HTML and PDF formats
  - ✓ Altmetric scores;
- Provide annual report to evaluate the performance of the journal.

## **Useful Information for JIPB Editors**

### **4.1 Making a final decision**

Once the comments and recommendations made by the reviewers have been received, it is time to make a thorough evaluation of the manuscript. This decision should be based on the Editor's own careful evaluation of the manuscript in conjunction with the comments provided by the reviewers. Decisions should be forwarded to the Editorial Office and not directly to the author.

It is important for Editors to understand that they play a vital role in the professional evaluation of the scientific merits of the submitted work. In addition, the Editor should also work with authors to help elevate the quality of the project such that manuscripts present significant new findings that are based on carefully conducted experiments, including all necessary controls. This professional interaction between Editors and the authors will greatly assist in the advancement of research programs in the area of integrative plant biology. An additional benefit will be that authors will select JIPB to publish high impact papers, which will help us to increase the impact factor of the journal.

### **4.2 Rejecting a paper**

Although the Editorial Office will communicate the final decision to the author, it is important that the SE and Editor provide a clear rationale as to why a paper should be rejected. Furthermore, in terms of the professional standing of the journal, it is essential that the SEs and Editors provide constructive feedback to the authors of all rejected manuscripts.

Below are some basic guidelines on what to include in a decision letter.

- Be clear about what you want the author(s) to do;
- Do not apologize for negative decisions;
- Do not imply that other Editors may have decided differently;
- Always include constructive comments concerning the work, even if it is being declined;
- Do not recommend that a manuscript be submitted to a “more specialized journal” unless you can provide an example.

### **4.3 How to identify good reviewers**

To select suitable reviewers for the manuscripts requires substantial consideration. The reviewers should provide sufficient information in order for the Editor to make the correct decision on whether to publish the paper in question. Without appropriate recommendations made by reviewers, the decisions of the Editor and SE can be quite challenging.

JIPB requires a minimum of two reviews of each manuscript, but the Editor is free to employ more if necessary. Cross-disciplinary studies may sometimes require several experts in order for the work to be evaluated fully. The confidentiality of the peer review process must be maintained at all times. Reviewers should remain anonymous unless they choose to identify themselves to an author.

#### **Finding good reviewers:**

- Scientists whose work you know well are often your most important source. Other potential reviewers might be recommended to you by other Editors;
- Authors often recommend reviewers who are very knowledgeable about the subject covered by the manuscript; however, in such cases it is important to ensure these colleagues can provide a fair and impartial review of the work;
- Younger scientists often give great reviews. Their tendency is to devote considerable time, and to provide more thoughtful, detailed arguments than more senior colleagues whose time is limited;
- You may also search for reviewers by expertise in the ScholarOne system;
- Finally, as an Editor, you have the option to act as a confidential reviewer. As a Editor for JIPB, you are a knowledgeable working scientist and are expected to use your expertise to make judgments about the quality of manuscripts.

Always appreciate good reviewers: consider sending a note of thanks to let them know that you appreciate their efforts. It is in the journal's interest that Editors keep a record of effective and ineffective reviewers for the future. As the journal strives to keep the publication cycle as short as possible, it is important to know those who handle assignments expeditiously.

Finally, reviewers should criticize work, not people. Comments that attack or insult authors not only create a negative impression of the journal; they breach professional codes of ethical behavior. Discard reviews that are obviously abusive and either obtain another review or request that the reviewer re-write their evaluation.

#### **4.4 Conflict of interests**

To promote ethical behavior, JIPB has formed a "conflict of interest" policy for editors and reviewers. In order to ensure that fair editorial decisions are made, any person who has a conflict of interest should not be in a position to review manuscripts (it is usually obvious when the title and authors of the manuscript are known). There is a conflict of interest if:

- You and any of the authors involved in the manuscript are close family friends or direct relatives;
- You and any of the authors involved in the manuscript are the colleagues of the same organization;
- You are working on a highly related research topic as the content of the manuscript, or you and the authors are competing to answer a similar research question, which may allow you to learn ideas and methods, previously unpublished, from the manuscript;
- You and any of the authors have a student-supervisor relationship within the past five years (including post-doc).

#### **4.5 Publication fees**

- The journal is partly financed by publication fees from non-invited manuscripts, which is 700 RMB (US\$ 100) for each print page;

- JIPB publishes all its content in full color. Authors are strongly encouraged to submit all their plates, figures and graphs in color. Color figures and color diagrams will appear in the online and print versions of JIPB, FREE OF CHARGE (standard page charges apply);
- For OpenAccess, each article will be charged a US\$2,500 APC fee in total. No additional charges for pages and color plates;
- Each SE or Editor is entitled to two FREE publications in JIPB per year.

## Contact Information

**5.1 Contact information for each editor is available online at**  
[http://www.jipb.net/ed\\_board.asp](http://www.jipb.net/ed_board.asp)

### 5.2 Editorial Office contacts

Name	Job Description
Dr. Ping He E-mail: he1001@ibcas.ac.cn	Head of the Editorial Office
Ms. Lingfeng Chen E-mail: chenlf@ibcas.ac.cn	Web Master
Dr. Jing-Jing Tan E-mail: tanjj@ibcas.ac.cn	Manuscript Manager
Dr. Tong Liu E-mail: liutong@ibcas.ac.cn	Communication Manager