

## WHAT ARE OPHIOSTOMATOID FUNGI?

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The Ophiostomatoid fungi are classic 'spore-drop' fungi, which produce slimy masses of spores at the tops of long stalks, adapted for dispersal by insects. The typical teleomorphs of these fungi, and many of the anamorphs, have this strategy. The taxonomic and phylogenetic distinction between the two classical genera of Ophiostomatoid fungi, *Ophiostoma* and *Ceratocystis*, is no longer a matter of debate, and it is clear that they belong to different orders of the *Ascomycota*. *Ophiostoma* is now the nominal genus in the family, order *Ophiostomataceae*, *Ophiostomatales*. In the latest *Dictionary of the Fungi*, the *Ophiostomatales* also includes the family *Kathistaceae*, with the single genus *Kathistes*. Other genera of the *Ophiostomataceae* include *Cornuvesica*, *Klasteryskya*, *Spumatoria* and *Subbaromyces*: the status of *Ceratocystiopsis* and *Grosmannia* as synonyms of *Ophiostoma* will be considered during this symposium. Although it is clear that *Ceratocystis* is related to the *Microascales*, it is unclear whether they are a sister group at the order and/or family level; a family name, *Ceratocystidaceae*, has been proposed but was not validly published. The two genera have evanescent asci, and ascocarps with similar morphology and ontogeny, features correlated with insect dispersal. Other ascomycete genera produce superficially similar ascocarps that also have evanescent asci, in particular *Microascus*. The association of species of *Ophiostoma* and *Ceratocystis* with particular species of insects is specific enough in some cases to be considered symbiosis, and in other cases it is more casual. The vector relationship with insects, however, is a strategy that makes both genera ecologically effective, as well as often quite destructive to the forests and crops economically valued by humankind. Their ability to cause plant diseases, and in some cases human diseases, and their tendency to invade new territory and new crops on a global scale, makes scientific understanding of their taxonomy and biology critical. This international symposium, held seventeen years after the first, seeks to compile, synthesize and analyze the developments of the past two decades.