

Botany 2025 Changes – Nov 7, 2024

Renovations in Tucson:

In early November, we heard some very unexpected news from the JW Marriott Starr Pass leadership that their property in Tucson will be undergoing renovations to the hotel rooms and the meeting space. Renovations will start in May 2025 and continue throughout the summer. We do have a renovation clause in the contract that we signed in 2019 for this 2025 meeting, and it allows for them to make renovations but to work with us to compensate us for the trouble and try to find a resolution that is acceptable to both parties.

At first, it sounded like the renovations would not make a huge impact on us, but very quickly that changed when the property received more information from their ownership on what the renovations will entail. After discussing several options with them which included looking into the Tucson Convention Center (too small for our meeting and too far from Starr Pass to shuttle folks back and forth all day), adding a few “outdoor” meeting spaces with air-conditioned tents (Tucson in July, need we say more?), and looking at their sister properties under the same ownership (we found them to also be too small or not available to us) – we are now exploring potential new sites for Botany 2025 and moving our Tucson meeting to July/early August of 2026 instead. Needless to say, this is a big challenge and comes a bit late in the game!

Johanne Stogran, Lori Strong (Burk Inc/new meeting planner) and Melanie have been on several calls and in constant contact via email. We agree that our best option is to move the Tucson meeting forward one year and try to source a different site quickly for the summer of 2025. Lori and team have already gone to work, talking with several cities and hotels that may have holes in their July schedules. Due to the extra work this move causes for all societies involved, we are asking for concessions from Starr Pass in Tucson, such as lowering their service charges for our meeting.

The hope is that by the end of November, we will have 2-4 good options for Botany 2025 for the conference program planning committee to consider. We are trying to find a hole in someone’s summer bookings along with good hotel rates. It’s going to be tough, but we are hopeful. Once we have a 2025 destination selected, we can communicate with all the Symposia and Colloquia proposers to find out if they wish to keep their proposal in the mix for 2025 or defer their proposal to Tucson 2026.

2026 Omaha Option:

The good news is that we have not signed a contract for 2026 in Omaha, which is what we had been looking at. Although the decision to go to Omaha had been approved, there were some issues with the original contract terms that we have been negotiating on and off for several months.

We have informed Visit Omaha, the convention center and Hilton hotel contacts of our situation and that we will not be signing a contract to hold our meeting there in 2026. There was a bit of push back since they have held this space for us for several months. They were hoping we would consider pushing Tucson back to 2027 and keep our intention of coming to Omaha in 2026. However, that seems unrealistic given the fact that we have several great proposals for Symposia and Colloquia that are based on Southwestern and cross-border themes in research. Pushing those back two years seems unrealistic and unwise.

Summary:

No Tucson in 2025 due to extensive renovations - seeking another venue

2026 Tucson

2027 - Look to East coast, Canada, Mexico, virtual?

The Canadian Botanical Society has expressed interested in meeting with us again.

Please keep this information confidential!

Do not share what you know about Tucson 2025 as this news needs careful handling and roll out to our members and broader botanical community at a time when we have solid information lined up. We also need more input from the Conference Program Planning Committee before sending out any communication.