

## **Xu Zhihong**

Xu Zhihong was born in Jiangsu province. He graduated from Peking University in 1965 and joined the Shanghai Institute of Plant Physiology of the Chinese Academy of Science, from which he began his career in botanical research in 1969.

From 1978 to 1981, Xu Zhihong worked at the John Innes Institute and the University of Nottingham, developing a procedure to improve anther culture in barley and a technique of protoplast isolating from young roots that could significantly improve the culture of protoplast of legumes and brassicas. After he returned to China, his work on the culture of protoplast in crops and trees ranging from soya bean and peanut to poplar and mulberry trees earned him the Chinese Academy of Science First Prize in Natural Science in 1990 and its Third Prize of National Natural Science the following year. After that, his research work has been focused on plant development and plant biotechnology.

Xu Zhihong has presented almost two hundred papers at international conferences as well as publishing books and articles on the plant growth, development, tissue and cell culture and the genetic transformation of plants.

Xu Zhihong's involvement in professional organisations has encompassed both national and international bodies. President of China's oldest university, Peking University, since 1999, he has also chaired the Chinese Society of Cell Biology and the National Committee of Man and the Biosphere Programme of UNESCO. He has served as the Hong Kong Government's non-Hong Kong Based Member of the Council of Advisors on Innovation and Technology and Chairman of the International Association of Plant Tissue Culture.

Xu Zhihong has received many awards from institutions outside China, including an Honorary DSc from De Montfort University in 1994 and the University of Nottingham in 2000. In December 1999, exactly forty years after he enrolled there as an undergraduate, he was appointed the thirtieth President of Peking University. He is also Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Science (1992-2003).

Xu Zhihong's dedication to communication between scholars at all levels was demonstrated when he established an electronic President's Bulletin Board at Peking University and declared himself happy to have received over two thousand messages from the sixty thousand staff and students in its first month of operation. His vision for his university of 'patriotism, progression, democracy and science' depends both on the integration of the natural sciences and the humanities and on wide international cooperation.