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Preface

The papers in this issue were presented by symposium speakers at the 1989 annual meeting of the Entomological Society of America in San Antonio, Texas. The symposium, entitled "Biochemical Strategies of Offense and Defense at the Plant–Insect Interface," addressed the roles of biochemistry and the disposition of natural products in plant–insect interactions.

During the last thirty years, the discipline of chemical ecology has provided many examples and a loose theoretical framework concerning plant–insect interactions. Perhaps due to the variables involved when considering multiple interactions at both ecological and chemical levels of organization, theories have had limited applicability. At the risk of adding even more confounding complexity, workers recently began to consider the role of biochemistry in plant–insect interactions. Impressive growth of knowledge in both plant and insect biochemistry and molecular biology is now contributing to research on interactions among organisms at the ecological level.

The symposium was therefore organized under the idea that the biochemical/natural product components of plants and insects interact in a complex manner at an interface—the physical, chemical, and biotic boundary between plant and insect systems. Effects of biochemicals passing between organisms are mediated by (or themselves mediate) numerous factors at the interface. These papers discuss the impact and various characteristics of the interface in a number of plant–insect systems.

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