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My are beginning to understand interactions of plants with the biotic environment at a level of detail that was difficult to imagine when I was an undergraduate student at Wye College in the mid-1970s. My interest in what was then called 'physiological plant pathology', started at Wye, but it was my move to Lancaster for postgraduate work that cemented my interest in plant disease physiology. I was very fortunate to be supervised for my PhD by Peter Ayres whose gentle approach to supervision and enthusiasm for physiological plant pathology made my time at Lancaster very happy. Over the years, I have been very fortunate to be able to discuss ideas with various colleagues, especially Nigel Paul, Ian Bingham and Adrian Newton. I am most grateful to Nigel Balmforth, who has always been supportive of my ideas, for books and has shown considerable patience when I've asked for deadline extensions. Finally, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Beverley for not only encouraging me in my book-writing activities, but also putting up with my grumpiness when the writing is not going well.

I have taught modules on the physiological responses of plants to pathogens since 1982, and over the years, this has developed to include physiological responses to pests and parasitic plants. It appears logical to me to study plant responses to different attackers in the same module, and in the absence of a single text adopting this approach, I decided to write one. It took me longer than expected, and there were times I thought I'd taken on too big a task, but the more I delved into the literature, the more fascinated I became. I hope this fascination comes through in the following chapters.

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