Plants communicate with each other by using clicking sounds

It's been known for a while that some plants are able to communicate with each other through chemical signaling — but new research published in *Trends in Plant Science* now suggests that plants not only respond to sounds as well, they can also talk to each other, by making "clicking" sounds.

Plants like cabbage can emit a volatile gas, namely methyl jasmonate, that warns their vegetative brethren that a herbivore is in the ‘hood — annoying things like caterpillars or garden shears.

This got Exeter University scientist Monica Gagliano thinking that maybe other plants could perform a similar trick, but with sounds. And her intuition was right. She, along with fellow researchers Stefano Mancuso and Daniel Robert, used powerful acoustic instrumentation which allowed them to hear clicking sounds coming from the roots of corn saplings. They also found that when they
suspended the young roots in water and played a continuous noise at 200 Hz – a similar frequency to the clicks – the plants grew towards the source of the sound.

Gagliano and her team concluded that plants are indeed communicating with each other by making clicking sounds that travel easily through soil. It's thought that, like the methyl jasmonate, these signals are warning of incoming threats.

The discovery shows that the role of sound in plants, a field of study referred to as bioacoustics, has yet to be fully explored and understood. It's quite possible, notes Gagliano, that some form of sensitivity to sound and vibrations may also play an important role in the life of plants.

You can check out the entire paper at *Trends in Plant Science*. 