



Cover: Confocal microscopy projection image of a *Ciona* tail bud embryo. Wheat germ agglutinin staining (green) demonstrates the architecture of the ascidian embryonic extracellular matrix (ECM), which presents in two distinct layers. The outer layer localizes at the body surface of the epithelium, whereas the inner one is the sheath surrounding the notochord. DAPI staining (blue) indicates cell nuclei. On page 1383, Wei et al. reveal the architecture, molecular composition and dynamic expression profile of the ECM in ascidian embryos and larvae, providing clues for understanding the function of the ECM in chordate development. Image provided by Bo Dong and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence.

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