

Excellence in Extension Award

This award was established in 1988 by the APS Council in recognition of excellence in extension plant pathology. The Award is presented to those involved in formal plant pathology extension with recognized superior contributions in developing or implementing leadership roles in local, regional, or national honor societies or professional organizations.

Thomas A. Kucharek



Thomas A. Kucharek was born in Cleveland. He developed an interest in agriculture while attending Kent State University, Kent, OH, and worked as a summer helper at the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station in Wooster. He earned an M.S. degree from the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, then moved to Stillwater, OK, under an exchange program in which he continued his graduate studies. He completed his Ph.D. research and received his degree from the University of Minnesota. He began his career as extension

plant pathologist at the University of Florida in 1970.

Dr. Kucharek is recognized for his development of an outstanding extension plant pathology program in Florida and for his role in helping growers utilize research information effectively in a systems approach to plant disease control. His first goal in Florida was to organize a plant disease diagnostic clinic based on contemporary technology.

Dr. Kucharek developed control strategies for numerous diseases of vegetable and agronomic crops in Florida. He improved spray programs and urged use of resistant cultivars as ways to develop more integrated systems of disease control. He was involved with southern corn leaf blight and soilborne wheat mosaic outbreaks and helped identify resistant germplasm. He developed a disease control program for peanut based on field trials, which includes use of predictive models, effective spray techniques, and crop rotation. Dr. Kucharek established a downy mildew warning service for watermelons and developed a sanitation program that has significantly reduced black rot on commercial crucifer farms. He designed an integrated pest control program for home garden use that has been widely adapted, even in other states. He has most recently been involved in developing control programs for tomato spotted wilt virus.

Early in his career Tom developed a reputation for staying in inexpensive motels located near fishing piers. One night he rented a small motel room for \$4. The manager guaranteed that he would need no air conditioner because the room had a fan and the evening breeze was cold. The fishing was enjoyable, but sleep was impossible. Tom learned never to rent a room with a one speed fan. I am glad that Tom has a high-speed extension program. We are proud to present this Excellence in Extension Award to Tom Kucharek for developing this program.