

# CIBA-Geigy Award

Sponsored by the CIBA-Geigy Corporation, this award is given to individual plant pathologists who have made significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge of plant diseases or their control. The award consists of a trophy and an expense-paid trip to Basel, Switzerland.

## Christine T. Stephens



**Christine T. Stephens** was born and raised in Rochester, NY. She received her B.A. in botany from Smith College in 1973. Her graduate degrees were from The Ohio State University (M.S., 1976 and Ph.D., 1978). Between college and graduate school she toured the Orient for 6 months. In 1978, she was appointed an extension specialist and assistant professor of botany and plant pathology, Michigan State University, and was promoted to associate professor in 1984.

Dr. Stephens' extension duties at first included upland vegetables but were soon expanded to include ornamentals. Within 2 years she was appointed extension project leader, which is an indication of how quickly she had gained the confidence of her colleagues. Her greatest contribution in extension has been the successful development and operation of the Multidisciplinary Plant Diagnostic Clinic at Michigan State University. This clinic deals in a centralized and expeditious way with all types of plant problems and has interactions with extension and nonextension personnel from the departments of botany and plant pathology, crops and soil sciences, entomology, forestry, and horticulture, and the Pesticide Research Center. Samples have increased from 2,000 to more than 4,000 per year since the clinic began. An integrated database system accessible by computer and modem has enabled county extension agents to receive immediate diagnoses and recommendations without the delay of the conventional mail service. The confidence of county agents, growers, and consultants in the diagnostic system has increased greatly, and the clinic has been received by the extension staff of the campus and state with high acclaim. It is a natural outgrowth of integrated pest management programs.

In 1984 she developed the "Glasshouse Ornamental Disease Control Handbook," the only one of its kind. Recognizing the problem of the home gardener in finding pesticides registered for home garden use, she coordinated the writing of a bulletin in which the pesticides listed can be found in home garden stores. She gained international recognition with the NCR-173 publication "Major Problems in Poinsettia Culture," which she took leadership in developing.

Dr. Stephens has built a significant research program at

Michigan State University. Her major research centers on the decline in yields of the perennial vegetable asparagus. In 1982 she organized a coordinated research effort that culminated in a grant from the USDA/CSRS. A research team composed of pathologists, horticulturalists, entomologists, agricultural chemists, and geneticists has identified several factors involved in the decline. Dr. Stephens' laboratory found evidence that an interaction of *Fusarium moniliforme* and *F. oxysporum* f. sp. *asparagi* and allelopathic asparagus tissues enhanced the severity of crown and root rot. Since root rot caused by *Fusarium* spp. is considered to be one of the major causes in asparagus decline, the presence and buildup of asparagus tissue in the soil may be involved in the decline process. This and other work has led to the recommendation that fields be planted to crops other than asparagus for several years after removal of an established asparagus planting.

Dr. Stephens has received a number of awards, including MSU Women's Achievers, The Ohio State University College of Agriculture Alumni Association Young Professional Achievement Award, MSU Outstanding Extension Specialist Award, MSU Extension Specialist of the Year, and MSU Extension Specialist Outstanding Leadership Award. She has served on committees for APS, including Chemical Control and Teaching. She was on the Fungicide Nematicide Editorial Board and was chairman of the ad hoc committee on the State of Women and Minorities in APS. Dr. Stephens has been active in the local chapter of Sigma Xi and was appointed to The Ohio State University College of Agriculture Alumni Council. She also belongs to Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, and Delta Sigma Gamma.

Dr. Stephens has been active in MSU and community volunteer work, including holding high offices in the YWCA, Faculty/Professional Women's Association, and the Junior League in Lansing. She has been the United Way coordinator for both the department and college. Dr. Stephens has taught or participated in various courses on vegetables, ornamentals and greenhouse diseases, economic plants, and agriculture technology. She has been the major professor of 10 graduate students and has been on the guidance committee of 24 other graduate students in botany and plant pathology, horticulture, and entomology.

She has published 27 papers in refereed journals, more than 70 extension bulletins and technical papers, and has made over 300 extension presentations.