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Dr. Gregory E. Shaner – Purdue University
Award for Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement



Dr. Greg Shaner grew up in Portland, Oregon and completed his B.S. in 1964 and his Ph.D. in 1968 at Oregon State University. During his college days, Shaner spent several summers working for the U.S. Forest Service, providing fire suppression, disposal services and campground maintenance. Being a true Oregonian, he is an outdoor enthusiast. He is currently involved locally with “Trees Lafayette” and enjoys sailing and woodworking and spending time with his family.

Greg Shaner came to Purdue University in 1968 as an assistant professor of plant pathology. For 40 years he was an imaginative and highly productive plant scientist who devoted his research efforts to host plant resistance, plant genetics, plant breeding, crop protection, and disease epidemiology related to the improvement of soft red winter wheat and spring oat. He was a member of a research group that included other plant pathologists, agronomists, and entomologists who focused basic and mission-oriented developmental research to answer basic questions related to the development of improved germplasm useful in the improvement of cultivars. Shaner was directly involved in the development of 15 cultivars and 4 germplasm lines of soft red winter wheat, and 4 cultivars of spring oat. Several of these have become leading cultivars in the eastern United States, as well as important sources of germplasm for other cereal breeding programs throughout the world. The importance of these cultivars is that

they combine superior agronomic traits, grain quality, and resistance to a broad spectrum of diseases.

During his career, Dr. Shaner was one of only a few cereal pathologists who bridged the spectrum from molecular bases to field expression to actual breeding for disease resistance. His contributions to the development and release of multiple soft wheat and spring oat cultivars earned him the highest acknowledgement of being named a “Fellow” by both the Crop Science Society of America and the American Phytopathological Society.

Dr. Shaner brought very effective leadership to state, regional, and national agricultural groups and committees including the American Oat Workers Committee, the Oat Crop Advisory Committee, the Indiana Crop Improvement Association Board of Directors, and regional committees NCR-15, and NCAC-14. He served as vice-chairman of the Agricultural Chemicals Study Committee, Indiana Institute of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition. In his multiple roles during his career, Dr. Shaner has helped define oat research priorities and scientific manpower needs during times of budget reductions, or shifts from an applied to a basic emphasis within ARS/USDA, and of increased interest and opportunities in oat research due to health and nutritional attributes.

Shaner’s research program constituted only one aspect of his wide ranging professional activities, which also included teaching, administration and service. For many years he taught a successful, well-received graduate-level course in plant disease resistance. Shaner was one of the department’s most dedicated, consistent and conscientious teachers. He excelled as an educator, mentor, and friend to numerous undergraduate and graduate students over the past 40 years. He served as a major professor for 18 Ph.D. and M.S. students and on the advisory committees on more than 100 other graduate students at Purdue University.

Shaner received numerous invitations to lecture, both nationally and internationally. He served as head of the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology from 1982-1987, supervising a large and diverse group in research ranging from cell physiology through weed science and plant pathology. His involvement in field research over the past 40 years and in extension for the last 15 years gave him a thorough understanding of crop disease encountered in the field and the technical skills and information needed to solve problems. He is well respected throughout the State of Indiana, nationally, and internationally for his presentation skills, knowledge, and professionalism. He is an educator at many levels.