

Turfgrass Specialist is Promoted at Geneva

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by John Zakour and J. Grant

GENEVA, NY: Michael G. Villani has been promoted to full professor of entomology at Cornell University. Villani specializes in turfgrass and soil insect ecology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY. He came to Geneva in 1984 as an assistant professor and was promoted to associate professor in 1991.

"Mike came to Geneva to take over the excellent turf program of Dr. Haruo Tashiro, but also to add expertise in soil insect ecology," said Wendell Roelofs, entomology department chair. "He not only become the 'king of turf' in the United States-and recognized as such world-wide-but added a whole new dimension to department programs with his expertise on insects that live below the surface. He has creatively developed new techniques to study soil insect behavioral patterns, which are key to the managing the life stages of pest species that live in the soil."

Villani is a consummate teacher and cooperator who devotes generous amounts of time to graduate and undergraduate students, technicians, visiting scientists, cooperators in Geneva and other departments at Cornell, and around the world. "Mike routinely participates in workshops on soil insects in the U.S. and other countries, and has contributed greatly to turf extension activities-an area that is rapidly expanding in New York State," says Roelofs.

Villani's initial assignment at Cornell was 100 percent research. Realizing the tremendous need in the turfgrass industry, he requested a partial extension appointment. He and his research group annually conduct four-week sessions in the Geneva Middle School and all fifth grade classes on the biology of beetles and bugs and the scientific method.

Villani is quick to share the credit for his many accomplishments with his research group, scientific collaborators, and the many turfgrass professionals who cooperate on field projects.

Villani has made major contributions to the turfgrass industry through numerous research publications, hundreds of technical and extension articles, and two important entomology references.



Dr. Michael G. Villani

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The first book, *The ESA Handbook of Turfgrass Insect Pests*, was co-edited with Dr. Rick Brandenburg. Most recently, he revised the classic book, *Turfgrass Insects of the United States and Canada*, with Patricia Vittum, and Tashiro. In 1997, the Entomology Society of America honored him with the National Recognition Award in Urban Entomology.

Villani, a native New Yorker, first discovered Geneva when he started his higher education at Hobart College. He received his B.A. in Liberal Arts from SUNY Stony Brook in 1979, and his Ph.D in Entomology from North Carolina State University in 1984. He is a member of the Landscape Horticulture Statewide Program Executive Committee and has served as chair of both the Cornell IPM Turfgrass and Ornamentals Working Group, and the Cornell Community IPM Working Group.

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