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Cornell Graduate Students Receive Awards

By Joe Ogradnick

GENEVA, NY: Two Cornell University graduate students received awards from the departments of entomology and plant pathology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY. Jodi Creasap, a graduate student in plant pathology, received the 2005 Robert M. Gilmer award. Xin Zhang, a fourth-year PhD student in the department of entomology, was named the 2005 Villani award winner.

Creasap is a student in Thomas Burr's program. "It is a pleasure to have a student like Jodi in the lab," said Burr, who is director of the Station and a professor of plant pathology. "She is a team player who takes full advantage of opportunities to improve her career. Whatever path she decides to take as a plant pathologist, she will do very well."

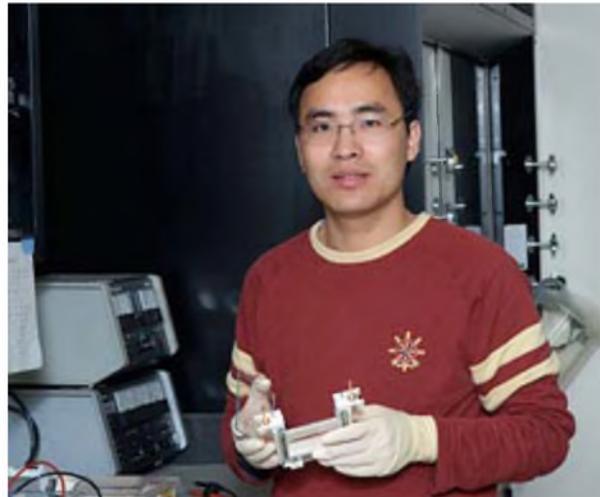
The \$5,000 Gilmer Award is named for Robert M. Gilmer, a faculty member in the department of plant pathology at Geneva from 1950 to 1975, who served as department chairman from 1967-72. He is fondly remembered for his intelligence, his great breadth of knowledge of plant diseases and for being a free thinker who challenged conventional views. Gilmer was known internationally for his research on virus diseases of deciduous tree fruits and grapes. Some of his major research contributions included the determination that sour cherry yellows is a virus complex and is pollen transmitted, and that X-disease of stone fruits is vectored by several leafhopper species. He also discovered that tobacco ringspot virus is widespread on grapes in New York and Canada. Through his efforts, a grape virus certification program was initiated in New York. The award furthers the recipient's research and professional development.

The 2005 Villani Award was presented to to Xin Zhang, a PhD student working with Ping Wang's group in the department of entomology. Zhang is studying the resistance in the cabbage looper to *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), the most successfully used bioinsecticide. Zhang is studying the Bt receptor genes in the looper to discover the gene mutation that confers the Bt resistance.

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Jodi Creasap receives the Gilmer Award from Station Director Tom Burr.



Xin Zhang is the recipient of the 2005 Villani Award

“Since he joined my lab two years ago, Xin has successfully cloned two genes which code for putative Bt receptors from the cabbage looper.” said Wang. “With the addition of these two genes cloned by Xin, our lab has cloned all the putative Bt receptor genes. Now Xin's research has entered a very exciting phase to identify the molecular alterations of the receptors that confer the resistance to Bt toxins. I am very pleased to have Xin in my program. The Villani Award is a well-deserved recognition for his excellent graduate research.”

The Villani Award is a stipend given annually to a graduate student in the entomology department at Geneva, and is named in honor of Michael G. Villani who died in 2001. The insect soil ecologist set up the award to provide funds to help graduate students with their research efforts.

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Cornell University
New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva
Department of Plant Pathology
In Honor of Receipt
Jodi Creasap
As the Recipient of the Robert M. Gilmer
Graduate Student Award for 2005
In Recognition of Excellence in Academic, Research, and Service to the Department

Thomas H. Hall
Chairman, Department of Plant Pathology
May 12, 2005



