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## Helene Dillard is appointed director of Cornell Cooperative Extension

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ITHACA, N.Y. -- Helene R. Dillard, Cornell University professor of plant pathology, has been appointed director of Cornell Cooperative Extension and associate dean of Cornell's New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and New York State College of Human Ecology.

She succeeds D. Merrill Ewert, who took the position of president of Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, Calif., this past summer. Dillard's appointment begins Oct. 1.

The appointment awaits final confirmation from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Ann M. Veneman.

Dillard will focus her attention on strengthening and further developing Cornell Cooperative Extension's outreach effort across the state. She also plans to reinforce and build industry and organizational partnerships at the county, state and federal levels.

"We are very fortunate that Helene has agreed to undertake the critical appointment as director of Cornell Cooperative Extension," said Susan A. Henry, the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "Her extensive knowledge of New York state issues, including its diverse agricultural industry, and her commitment to extension make her ideal for it. She'll be a very strong leader."

"Helene is exceptionally well-qualified for this position and brings excellent leadership strengths and a clear vision of outreach through her experience in Cornell Cooperative Extension," said Patsy M. Brannon, the Rebecca Q. and James C. Morgan Dean of the College of Human Ecology. "Importantly, Helene is a scholar and her research in plant pathology is extensive, but to this position she brings a strong and demonstrated commitment to the integration of outreach and research that the university endorses and values."

Cornell Cooperative Extension is a major part of Cornell's land-grant mission, as it has been a part of the university since 1869. The organization disseminates information to New

York state communities. Through the colleges, cooperative extension provides educational opportunities in five major initiatives: agriculture and food systems; children, youth and families; community and economic vitality; environment and natural resources; and nutrition, health and safety. The state 4-H youth development program is another component of Cornell Cooperative Extension.

A professor of plant pathology at Cornell's New York State Agriculture Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y., Dillard served as chair of the station's plant pathology department from 1997 to 2001. Last year she became the associate director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, while continuing her plant pathology research efforts.

She joined Cornell in 1984 as an assistant professor and was promoted to associate professor in 1990. She became a full professor in 1998. Dillard received her bachelor's degree in biology of natural resources from the University of California-Berkeley in 1977. She earned both her master's degree in soil science, in 1979, and her doctorate in plant pathology, in 1984, from the University of California-Davis.

Dillard's research focuses on fungal and bacterial pathogens of vegetable crops, characterizing key factors that promote disease development and areas in which the plant-disease cycle can be interrupted. Her interests include plant disease epidemiology and management of plant pathogens in conventional, transitional and organic cropping systems. In her plant pathology extension work, she has distributed educational information on the etiology, epidemiology and control of fungal and bacterial diseases of vegetables, and she has developed integrated and sustainable disease management strategies.

In 1993 Dillard participated in the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development in helping to determine pest-management needs of small landholders in Zimbabwe. In 1996 she traveled on a scientific exchange in China as part of a group of Cornell scientists examining the biological control of vegetable pests.

Dillard is a member of the American Phytopathological Society, North American Sclerotinia Workers, the Bean Improvement Cooperative, Epsilon Sigma Phi (the professional organization for cooperative extension) and the New York State Association of County Agricultural Agents. She serves on Cornell's Land Grant Mission Review panel on Outreach/Extension: Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Human Ecology and Veterinary Medicine.

"The Land Grant Mission Review is giving us a chance to examine the role of the whole university as the land-grant university for New York state," said Dillard. "And it's giving us an opportunity to look at Cornell Cooperative Extension and how its outreach mission plays an integral role in the overall university mission."

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