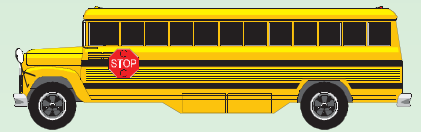


Back to school



Humans have medical doctors, animals have veterinary doctors. Thanks to a new program at the University of Florida, plants now have plant doctors.

The University of Florida's Plant Medicine Program, a doctoral training program started in 1999, educates students in all aspects of plant disease diagnosis and care. Students spend three to four years studying in depth such subjects as entomology, nematology, bacteriology, mycology, virology, plant nutrition, plant physiology, soil science, weed science and agricultural law.

By taking such a wide array of courses, students develop an ability to evaluate the whole plant health picture. Like human practitioners, DPMs (Doctors of Plant Medicine) extend research conducted by plant pathologists and entomologists to clientele. Students who complete the program have the knowledge to identify plant health problems and know what management options to "prescribe." DPMs also are familiar with specialists in fields of plant pathology, nematology, entomology and related sciences and know where to seek help for the most difficult problems and how to translate research from these fields into management options.

Under the guidance of their supervisory committee, students tailor their course of study to their crop of interest, taking courses in such subjects as turfgrass, ornamental plant, fruit or vegetable production or regulatory aspects of pest management.

To gain real-world experience in plant health care, students spend the equivalent of half-a-year on internships, working for such entities as agribusinesses, government agencies and agricultural chemical companies.

While students do not have to conduct a large research project like students in a Ph.D. program do, many students have received experience in conducting experiments, either conducting them for various professors as a means of paying their way through school, or

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n

UF's Plant Medicine Program - educating the plant doctors of tomorrow

By John Porter and Phil Harmon

the program (each test taking eight-10 hours to complete), and an oral test (taking roughly four hours to complete) before they can receive the Doctor of Plant Medicine (DPM) degree.

So far, 27 people have earned their doctorates. Many of the graduates are currently working for government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, while others are working as extension agents and crop consultants, consulting on such issues as ornamental plant production and landscape and turfgrass management.

While other universities in the United States have expressed an interest in starting their own plant medicine programs, the University of Florida is unique in the world in offering such a comprehensive course of study. This has attracted people from all over the United States and from countries as far away as Bhutan and Mozambique to join this program. At the moment, nearly 40 people are in the program.

To learn more about the program, visit the website <http://www.dpm.ifas.ufl.edu> or contact Robert McGovern (director of the program) at (352) 392-3631 ext. 213, or by email at rjm@ifas.ufl.edu.

John Porter will be finishing his DPM degree at the University of Florida in the coming year and is exploring employment opportunities. Harmon is an assistant professor and extension specialist in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Florida-IFAS, Gainesville.

Every Certified Pest Control Operator in Florida reads **FLORIDA PEST PRO**.

Get your message to the people who make decisions.

Contact Mariann Holland for advertising information:

863-533-4114, mholland@barpr.com

www.flpestpro.com