

Dr. Peggy Thaxton is 2003 Cotton Genetics Research Award Recipient

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SAN ANTONIO, TX – Dr. Peggy M. Thaxton, a scientist and plant breeder at Texas A&M University, is the recipient of the 2003 Cotton Genetics Research Award.

The announcement was made here today during the Cotton Improvement Conference of the National Cotton Council (NCC)-coordinated 2004 Beltwide Cotton Conferences.

Thaxton, a research scientist in A&M's Department of Soil and Crop Sciences in College Station, received \$1,000 in recognition of her efforts. U.S. commercial cotton breeders have presented the Cotton Genetics Research Award for more than 40 years to a scientist for outstanding basic research in cotton genetics.

The Joint Cotton Breeding Policy Committee, comprised of representatives from state experiment stations, USDA, private breeders and the NCC, establishes award criteria.

Thaxton has been an integral part of the development of seven cotton cultivars and 28 germplasm lines since 1985. These are highly resistant to bacterial blight and represent some of the earliest maturing upland cotton germplasm available in the United States. Significant acreage of Tamcot cultivars has been planted in Texas and Oklahoma, providing additional yield and yield stability for producers.

"Peggy has contributed more to the scientific breeding community than the release of improved germplasm, although that alone is sufficient for receiving this award," said Dr. C. Wayne Smith, professor and associate head of A&M's Soil and Crop Sciences department. "Dr. Thaxton has been instrumental in maintaining and distributing bacterial blight cultures to scientists throughout the U.S. who are interested in developing bacterial blight resistant material." Smith said.

Thaxton also has expanded significantly her research devoted to expanding the genetic base of U.S. upland cotton germplasm, specifically identifying

germplasm that will germinate under low temperature stress and resist seed/seedling diseases.

"Given her success in this area over the past two decades, we can look forward to new and exciting scientific breakthroughs in the near future," he said.

Thaxton also has been instrumental in the co-direction of a number of graduate students since 1985 with many having become prominent plant breeders.

Ted Wallace, one of Thaxton's former students and now an associate professor at Mississippi State University, said Thaxton's dedication to the improvement of cotton germplasm had a significant influence on his desire to continue in the cotton improvement field.

"Breeders, including myself, have relied on Peggy as a one-stop source for anything related to bacterial blight," Wallace noted.

The author and co-author of numerous publications, Thaxton has led several special assignments, among them: 1) cotton coordinator for Texas Food and Fibers Commission research grants to the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station since 1995, 2) chairman of the Cotton Disease Council's Verticillium and Fusarium Wilt Committee from 1993 to 2002; and 3) chairman of the 2002 Beltwide Cotton Improvement Conference.

A member of the American Society of Agronomy and Crop Science Society of America, Thaxton earned a bachelor's degree from Old Dominion University and her master's and Ph.D. in plant breeding and horticulture from Texas A&M.

Source: National Cotton Council