

Pioneer Award

33rd National Agricultural Plastics Congress - 2006

Presented in recognition of work that broadens the importance of ASP through exemplary research and developmental efforts that have contemporary and future impacts to the field of plasticulture.



Dr. Katrine A. Stewart, Chair of the ASP Awards Committee made the presentation to Dr. Dennis Decoteau honoring his contributions to the importance of plasticulture in agricultural and horticultural crop production both in the United States and around the world

Dr. Dennis Decoteau

Dr. Dennis Decoteau is a professor of horticulture and plant ecosystem health in the Departments of Horticulture and Plant Pathology at Pennsylvania State University, and is past Department Chair . He received his PhD in the Plant and Soil Science Department at the University of Massachusetts in 1984 and then accepted a postdoctoral position at Purdue. In 1985 he moved to Clemson University as an assistant professor, steadily progressing through the ranks, ending his time there in 1997 as Chair of the department. From Clemson he was recruited to Penn State.

His primary area of research has been on the effect of light quality on plant growth and development. In 1986, he published the first research (Proc. Natl. Agr. Plastics Congr., Vol. 19) demonstrating that colored plastic mulches could affect not only soil temperature and root function, but could directly affect growth and development (morphogenesis) as well. Subsequent studies by Decoteau and co-workers demonstrated that certain types of reflective red mulch could often increase the early yield of trellised tomato. This pioneering work has helped stimulate additional work with colored and reflective mulches that have resulted in reflective mulch applications that increase crop yields and promote fruit coloration. Dr. Decoteau has also examined the spectral properties of greenhouse coverings a topic of increasing importance for the industry.

He helped promote plasticulture to the general public when he served as Associate Editor and Columnist for The Agri-Plastics Report. Recently, Dr. Decoteau has written an undergraduate text on Vegetable Crops that is being widely adopted by Horticulture Programs throughout the U.S. This textbook contains an excellent chapter on extension of the growing season that will help introduce students to plasticulture research.