



School of Integrative Plant Science
Crop and Soil Sciences Section



The 2014 MacDonald-Musgrave Awards for Excellence

The Section of Crop and Soil Sciences at Cornell University has recognized three outstanding members for the 2014 McDonald Musgrave awards. These awards are the highest honors bestowed by the Section, in honor of former professors, McDonald and Musgrave. Recipients were Mary Ellen Niederhofer, graduate field assistant (pictured, left), Rachel Hestrin, graduate student and PhD candidate (middle), and Jerry Cherney, professor (right).

The Musgrave award was given to Mary Ellen Niederhofer, who provides exceptional service as graduate field administrative assistant. She was recognized for her positive influence during the transition to membership in the new School of Integrative Plant Sciences (SIPS). Mary Ellen consistently strives to support our Field while coordinating with Fields across SIPS. These efforts will have a lasting impact on the sustainability and quality of our program into the foreseeable future. Mary Ellen is supportive and caring; she shows genuine concern for the well-being of students and coworkers, is a talented organizer of events, and provides valuable and unique contributions to the Cornell community.

Rachel Hestrin was given the graduate student award to recognize her leadership among graduate students, including her initiative in starting the First-Friday coffee that has become a regular event for our Section. She was an instrumental member of the Cornell team that won a 2013 P3 EPA award for a project proposal and student presentation on the National Mall in Washington, DC. She has provided exceptional service in developing our Section's collegiality: hosting seminar speakers, planning graduate student social events and retreats, building relationships between graduate students in our section and those in other sections, and most recently, helping to coordinate an outreach table at Mann library for World Soil Day.

The MacDonald Award was given to Professor Jerry Cherney, who has dedicated his field crops extension career to helping farmers and livestock operators ensure that forage crop production remains a key element for responsible stewardship of land resources. He has pioneered key research in the testing of grass biomass for combustion energy which he is developing for rural households and communities. He has been a stalwart defender and proponent of our multi-faceted and highly productive interdepartmental field crops program for over 25 years and has garnered respect and praise from cooperative extension staff and the farming community for his valuable service to them.

The MacDonald/Musgrave awards were established in honor of two former crop science faculty members, Robert Musgrave and Harry MacDonald, to recognize outstanding accomplishments within the department. Both joined the Agronomy Department in 1940. MacDonald did research, teaching and international outreach on pasture and forage crops until his retirement in 1975. Musgrave, studied and mentored students in crop production, physiology and ecology until his retirement in 1978.