

Julian G. Leach



Julian G. Leach, Professor of Plant Pathology and Head of the Department of Plant Pathology, Bacteriology, and Entomology, at West Virginia University, was recognized internationally as an authority on insect transmission of plant diseases.

Born in Tennessee, educated at the University of Tennessee and the University of Minnesota, Dr. Leach spent the early part of his professional life at the University of Minnesota. He came to West Virginia University in 1938 as Head of the Department of Plant Pathology, Bacteriology, and Entomology.

During his approximately half century of professional service to agriculture, he demonstrated outstanding ability to understand and apply basic principles in the field of plant pathology. He was among the first to recognize the existence of pathogenic races of the stem rust of wheat. He pioneered work pointing out the relation of the seed corn maggot to black leg of potato and of bark beetles to blue stain of conifers, which emphasized the importance of insects in the spread of plant diseases.

Dr. Leach displayed unusual foresight as an administrator in his development of strong, well-balanced program in teaching and research. He was active nationally in the development of profession of plant pathology, serving as President of the American Psychopathological Society in 1942 and serving on the Council and other committees determining policies of this society.

Because of his ability as an organizer and his emphasis on principles, the Rockefeller Foundation enlisted Dr. Leach in 1953 to help initiate a potato improvement program in Columbia, South America. He served a similar capacity in Alaska in 1955.

As head of the Department, Dr. Leach provided vision and leadership for staff programs in control of plant diseases, including the pesticide dealer's contact program, the development of modern pesticides, the development of resistant varieties of crop plants, the discovery of oak wilt and research on its control, and the internationally known basic program of fungus physiology. The first textbook on INSECT TRANSMISSION OF PLANT DISEASES published in 1940, is still a leader in its field.

He received the Gamma Sigma Delta Award of Merit from the West Virginia Chapter in 1959 for "Outstanding Service to Agriculture."

Dr. Leach was a true leader, strong yet compassionate, with wisdom and foresight. He was a strong force in organizing the WVU Senate and the Graduate School. He was the "father" of the Master of Agriculture program and the undergraduate Bachelor of Science basic science major.