C. R. Weber Award to Curtis Scherder

The 2006 C. R. Weber Award for Excellence in Plant Science has been granted to Iowa State University student, Curtis Scherder. Scherder is a graduate student in the Agronomy Department and studying plant breeding with soybean breeder, Dr. Walter Fehr. The award is given to outstanding Ph.D. candidates studying plant breeding and is named for Dr. C. R. Weber, a soybean breeder with the USDA and a long-time member of the faculty at Iowa State University.

Scherder grew up on his family’s farm near Bowling Green, Missouri. His family grew soybeans, corn, and forages and raised hogs and cattle. His parents, Stephen and Lucy Scherder, still live in Missouri near Bowling Green. It was Scherder’s experience on his family’s farm that drew him to the study of agriculture and plant breeding. Scherder received a bachelor’s degree in plant science and biochemistry from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a master’s degree in plant breeding from Iowa State University. Scherder now lives in Ames and is pursuing a Ph.D. in plant breeding. He began his doctoral studies in January 2006 and expects to graduate in 2008. After completing his degree, Scherder plans to work as a plant breeder in the private sector.

Scherder’s research focuses on developing a soybean line with double the normal amount of mid-oleic fatty acids, a trait that increases the stability of the extracted oil and its long-term storage capacity. His breeding program will develop lines that can be combined with low-linolenic soybean varieties currently under development or in production. Soybeans high in oleic acid and low in linolenic acid will produce oils with greater stability, thus eliminating the need for partial hydrogenation, a procedure that creates unhealthy trans-fats. His breeding program strives to produce soybeans high in the mid-oleic fatty acids while possessing sound agronomic properties, including yield, standability, and acceptable levels of protein and oil. Scherder is working with Dr. Walter Fehr, a soybean breeder and a member of the Raymond F. Baker Center for Plant Breeding.

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