

Researchers developing better wheat

February 16 2006

Eighteen universities across the United States are combining desirable genes from different varieties of wheat to make better and more competitive varieties.

Purdue plant geneticist Herbert Ohm said the project, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Research Initiative, is designed to create strains that are more resistant to disease, drought and insects while improving yields.

Wheat varieties grown in the United States include spring and winter, white grain, red grain, bread or hard wheat, pastry or soft wheat, and durum or pasta wheat.

Ohm and his colleagues are focusing their research on glume blotch, which occurs almost annually throughout the eastern region. The fungus causes charcoal-colored lesions on wheat heads and leaves that result in grain loss.

His group also is studying fusarium head blight, Hessian fly, barley yellow dwarf virus, leaf blotch and powdery mildew.

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