

NEWS

Area researcher receives award for fruit-fly work

By **KRISTEN LANDREVILLE** Special to The Sun

Published 12:27 a.m. ET June 4, 2003

Invasive fruit flies beware.

A Gainesville researcher has won a national award for his contribution to controlling fruit-fly outbreaks.

Peter Teal, the acting director of the Center for Medical, Agricultural and Veterinary Entomology at the U.S. Agriculture Department's Agricultural those pesky bugs that cost Florida taxpayers millions of dollars each year trying to protect the citrus industry.

The Arthur S. Flemming Award, which recognizes scientific contributions to the federal government, is awarded to 12 federal employees each year. Teal won the award in the science category.

"I'm actually very overwhelmed," said Teal, a courtesy professor at the University of Florida. "I learned about this award one month ago, and I'm still saying, 'Wow.' "

The cost of controlling the recent outbreaks of the Mediterranean fruit fly in Florida has exceeded \$50 million, Teal wrote in an e-mail.

His research, he said, has the potential to cut costs of controlling the fruit fly by 50 percent. That means that the \$8 million state taxpayers fork out each year could be cut in half, he said.

"Our goal is to eliminate these flies so that we can keep our (agriculture) market open to international trade," Teal said.

For example, Japan imports fruit from Florida, and a fruit-fly outbreak could decrease Florida's shipments to Japan, he said.

Teal said that to control outbreaks, sterile male fruit flies are produced in large numbers. Once they are released into the wild, the female fruit flies mate with the sterile males.

Teal said his research developed a technique to improve the mating potential of the sterile male fruit flies by replacing hormones in the fly.