

Dr. Mary Ann Lila

Dr. Mary Ann Lila will direct the N.C. State Fruit and Vegetable Science Institute at the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis.

Research Interests: Isolation and characterization of bioactive components from highly pigmented fruits, medicinal herbs and their in-vitro cell culture systems.

Education

- Ph.D., University of Wisconsin
- M.S., University of Illinois
- B.S., University of Illinois



About Dr. Mary Ann Lila:

Dr. Mary Ann Lila, a professor in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois, will direct the N.C. State Fruit and Vegetable Science Institute. Lila, who now directs the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences international program, will assume her new duties Aug. 1.

Lila, who has devoted nearly a quarter-century career at the University of Illinois to studying the biologically active properties of plants, said the mission of the FVSI and the Research Campus is "completely in line with my background and philosophy and research."

Lila's research focuses on the bioactive compounds found in some foods, particularly fruits that confer human health benefits when the food is eaten. The benefits of eating foods and beverages rich in these compounds are well-established, according to Lila, but the identity and protective mechanisms of the compounds have not been defined.

Lila's research is aimed at identifying bioactive compounds and understanding how they work. She is particularly interested in compounds that appear to help counteract chronic disease and promote endurance.

Many of the plants with which Lila has worked are found in some of the most inhospitable parts of the world, and as a result of her efforts to locate and study these plants; her research has taken on an international flavor. She has large ongoing research projects in Egypt, Central Asia, Oceania, Mexico and sub-Saharan Africa, and is vice president of the Global Institute for BioExploration (GIBEX). In 1999, Lila won a Fulbright Senior Scholarship to conduct research and outreach in New Zealand. She returns to Australia at least once a year.

In addition, Lila has served as the U.S. correspondent for the International Association of Plant Biotechnology and as president of the Society for In Vitro Biology. She is also a fellow of the society, and served for four years as associate director of the nationally acclaimed Functional Foods for Health Program.

At the University of Illinois, Lila has been honored with the Paul A. Funk Scholarship Recognition Award (the premier research award in her college), the Spitze Professorial Career Excellence Award, and the Faculty Award for Excellence in Research, the University Scholar Award, the Amoco Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Instruction and the Lilly Endowment Teaching Fellowship.