

A Tale of Two Diseases: Extension in the best and worst of times. R. C. Kemerait Jr. Department of Plant Pathology, the University of Georgia, 2360 Rainwater Road, Tifton, GA 31793.

Though not a plant pathologist, Charles Dickens was certainly appalled at the starvation during the Irish potato famine. His stories are filled with sympathy towards those who suffer greatly. Dickens' novel, "A Tale of Two Cities" unfolds during the French Revolution and opens with the lines, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...." Such contrast, on a much less desperate scale, occurs in agricultural Extension today. The University of Georgia remains committed to the traditional pillars of agricultural Extension, to include the importance of the county agents and their relationships with growers, dedication to the county delivery system, and the dissemination of "non-biased, research-based recommendations." However, the past decade was difficult for UGA Extension. Budget cuts and early retirements have led to loss of many senior and experienced agents. Delays occurred in hiring researchers, Extension specialists and county agents. During the last 10 years, advances in research, new fungicides and resistant varieties resulted in progress in management of historically important diseases, like southern stem rot (*Sclerotium rolfsii*) of peanut. However, the emergence of target spot of cotton (*Corynespora cassiicola*) resulted in frustration as recommendations for management were perceived inadequate and slow to develop by some and as exaggerated and unnecessary by others. This presentation will focus on Extension efforts to integrate management strategies for two very different diseases. It will also address lessons learned that will help battle diseases, such as bacterial blight of cotton (*Xanthomonas citri* pv. *malvacearum*), in the future. Also looming on the horizon are areolate mildew and "blue disease" of cotton. While not facing beheadings, as was the fate of many in Dickens' novel, today's Extension specialists must remain nimble, creative and aggressive in order to meet the needs of the growers and to build consensus among researchers, consultants and colleagues from the agrichemical and seed industries.