

Black Botanists from the Past to the Present

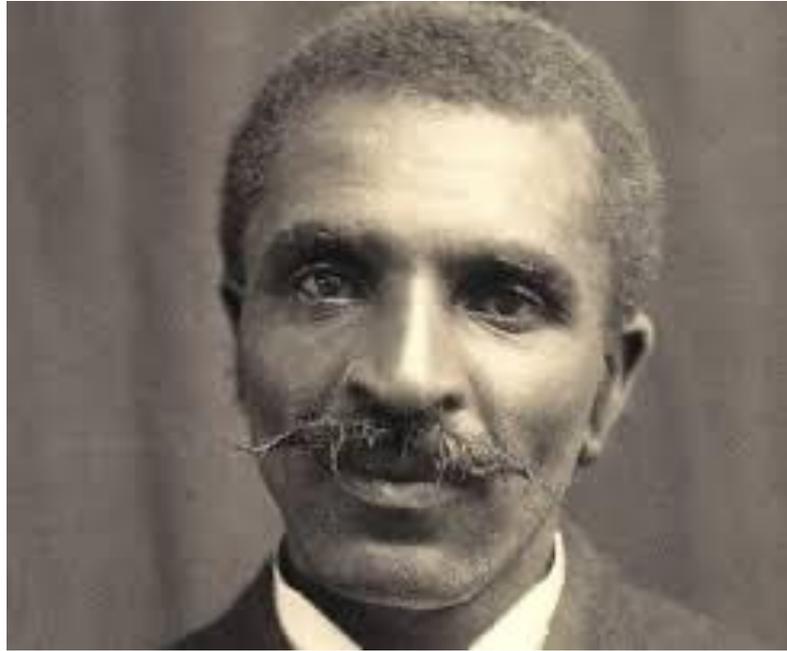
A learning resource for KS2
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Black Botanists – from the Past to...



...the Present.



What's a **Botanist**?

Hint - the pictures
give you a clue!



A botanist is a
plant scientist
– an expert in
the study of
plants.

Can you think of any
botanists?



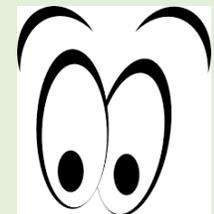
Black History Month October 2020

There are many famous botanists - but for **Black History Month** let's celebrate some of history's black botanists and some that are working in the field of botany today.

Botanists can work in many different ways – they can be:

plant scientists, herbalists, gardeners, garden designers, nature writers, TV presenters, activists, conservationists, horticulturists, farmers and many others...

Let's take a look!



Mary Seacole

1805 – 1881



- Mary Seacole was a **herbalist** and nurse (or 'doctress') who used traditional African and Caribbean remedies made from plants to treat illnesses and injuries.
- She was born and grew up in Jamaica where she learnt her herbal skills from her mother.
- In 1854 she travelled to the Crimean War to use her **botanical** and nursing skills to treat sick and injured soldiers, of which there were hundreds.
- Mary was a pioneering and charismatic woman who helped to save the lives of many. However she was not properly recognized for her bravery or contribution to the war until after she died.
- In 1991 she received the Jamaican Order of Merit and in 2004 she was voted greatest Black Briton.

Seacole's herbal remedies

Her traditional remedies were made from **plants**. She knew which plants to use and how to prepare them to treat different problems.

They included:

Aloe Vera to treat cuts to the skin



Ginger root for diarrhoea



Lemongrass to treat fever



Okra to heal boils, and



Lemon to treat coughs.



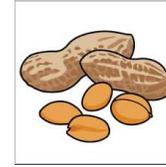
George Washington Carver

‘The Peanut Wizard’

1864 - 1943



150 years ago, people didn't like to eat peanuts – they were used to feed animals.



George Washington Carver was ‘the peanut wizard’ who convinced most of the United States that peanuts were a nutritious food that were also good for the soil they grew in. Now more than 700 million pounds of peanut butter are eaten every year in the States!

Born a slave in 1864, Carver and his brother were adopted by their slave owners after their mother was kidnapped. He left his home at the age of 12 to find a school in another town that would accept black students, and in 1896 he was the first black man to graduate from Iowa Agricultural College.

He was then invited to teach **agriculture** to students and farmers at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

“We are just beginning to learn the value of the peanut.”

George addresses US Congress in 1921

George taught farmers how to grow different **crops** (such as sweet potatoes and peanuts) that were better for the soil, nutritious to eat and would earn them more money.

He encouraged them to rotate the crops they grew from year to year so as not to ‘exhaust’ the soil.

At weekends he took his ‘school on wheels’ to teach poor farmers who couldn’t travel to the college. His advice helped many farms and families to survive in difficult times.



This George Washington Carver stamp was issued in the USA on February 3rd 1998.



To watch a short video about Carver, his life and achievements click on the link below:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdz8XTNttdc

Marie Clark Taylor

1911 - 1990

- Marie Clark Taylor studied the influence of light on **plant growth**.



- She was especially interested in how a plant decides to stop growing stems and leaves and instead starts growing flowers.
- This process is called:

PHOTOMORPHOGENESIS

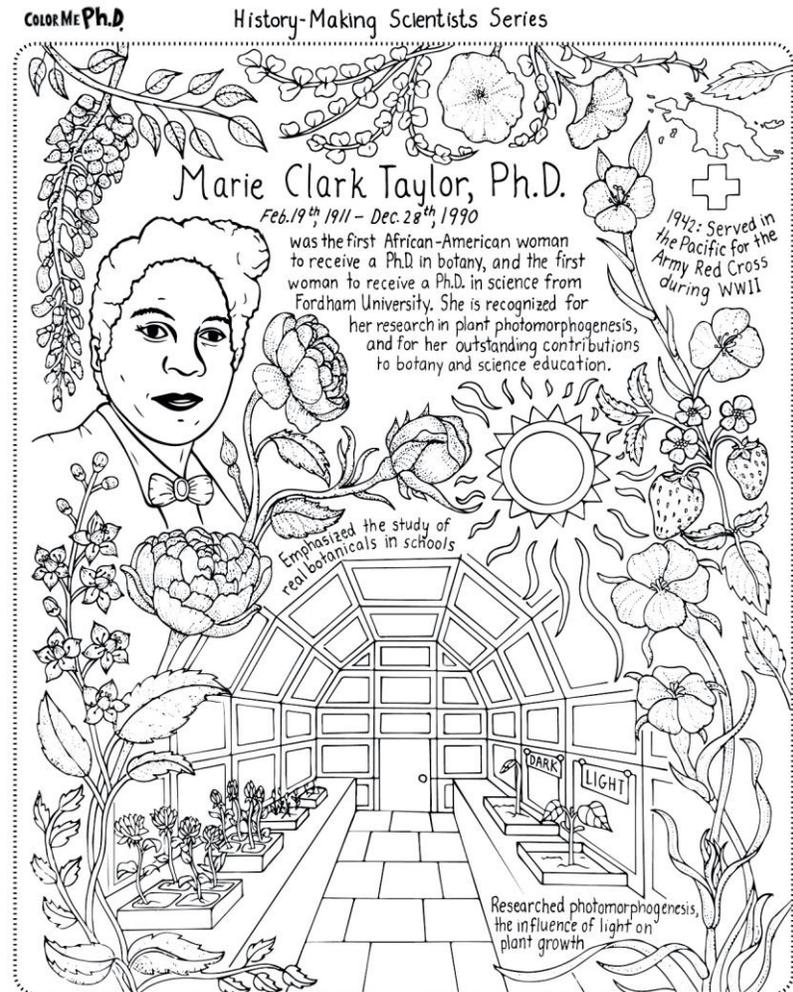


A woman of firsts...



- First African American woman to earn a PhD in **Botany** from Fordham University in New York City in 1941.
- First woman to earn a PhD in **Science** in the US.

To colour a great picture of Marie Clark Taylor – click on the picture below.



She went on to become the **Head of Botany** at Howard University in Washington D.C from 1947-1976.



Her teaching methods were revolutionary – she encouraged teachers to use real **botanical specimens** (plant material) and microscopes in their lessons.

In the 1960s she was asked by President Johnson to expand her teaching programmes overseas to other countries.

There is an auditorium named in her honour at Fordham University.





Now let's meet some of the
black **botanists** working today...

Each of their careers is very different,
but one thing stays the same – they all
love **plants**, care about the environment
and want to share their passion with
YOU!

The horticulturists:

Danny Clarke

Danny is a British horticulturist known as the 'Black Gardener'. He is also a garden designer and TV presenter on the BBC series

The Instant Gardener, where unloved gardens are brought back to life and transformed into new spaces. He is quoted as saying,

“We come from the Earth,
We return to the Earth,
and in between we have gardens.”



Tayshan Hayden-Smith

Tayshan, known as the 'Grenfell Guerilla Gardener', is the founder and co-director of Grow2Know – a company that creates inclusive green spaces and empowers young people through gardening and nature. Danny Clarke is also a director!



He helped to create the Grenfell Garden of Peace to bring colour and beauty after the dark and traumatic experience of the Grenfell Fire.



Ron Finley 'The Gangsta Gardener'



RON FINLEY PROJECT



Concerned with the lack of available fresh produce in Los Angeles USA, Ron Finley decided in 2010 to start growing vegetables in the pavement grass outside his front door. The police said it was illegal so he started a petition demanding the right to grow food in your own neighbourhood.

He now has a thriving community garden of beautiful fruits and vegetables, is a community leader and teacher and has helped to set up many other community gardens in Los Angeles.

The scientists:

Dr. Tanisha Williams – plant lover and founder of Black Botanists Week 2020.

Tanisha is a botanist at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania USA. She researches how plants around the world respond to climate change.



#BlackBotanistsWeek

Monday, July 6
#BlackBotanicalLegacy #BlackRoots #Botany101
Welcome to the inauguration of Black Botanical Legacy.
Tell us what you do, and teach us something new!

Tuesday, July 7
#PlantInteractions
Post a photo or video & share facts about the interactions between plants & other forms of life!

Wednesday, July 8
#BlackPlantLove
Share your love for plants through storytelling or a poem. Consider submitting it to @Plantlovestory.

Thursday, July 9
#BotanizingWhileBlack
Go live on Instagram to share your stories on why we need diverse communities in botany.

Friday, July 10
#PlantAppreciation #HowManyPlants
How many plants did you use today? Share photos of how you use plants in your day-to-day life.

Saturday, July 11
#BIPOCinNature #DiverseCommunitiesAreStrongCommunities
Post a photo or video of you exploring the natural world while paying tribute to those whose land we walk upon.

<https://blackbotanistsweek.weebly.com/>
Designed by: @haalimifolia

Tanisha on plants:

“Just because they can’t move doesn’t mean they don’t have exciting lives!”

More botanists:

Professor Nox Makunga – award winning botanist and science communicator at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. She specializes in the study of medicinal plants and their use in a non-destructive and sustainable way.



Joshua Ajowele



Joshua is from Nigeria but has just completed a Masters in Plant Diversity at the University of Reading in the UK. He's especially interested in the importance of plants as food in relation to the climate emergency, and how plants can be used to restore degraded or poor habitats.

The garden designers:



Arit Anderson

Arit is an award winning garden designer, writer and TV presenter on BBC Gardener's World. She originally worked in the fashion industry but her love of plants, people and places caused her to change her career - she is now passionate about the future of gardening in our changing climate and the power of the natural world to protect our mental health.



Juliet Sargeant

Juliet is another award winning garden designer – she won an RHS gold award at Chelsea Flower Show for her The Modern Slavery Garden.

It was the first show garden designed by a female black gardener. Now she is a RHS show garden judge!



Other interesting careers:



Michelle Obama and the White House Kitchen Garden

In 2009 Michelle Obama planted a vegetable garden on the White House Lawn. She, with the help of her Head Gardener and local school children, grew more than 50 types of fruits and vegetables that were used in meals for the White House, a local soup kitchen and a Washington D.C. food bank. She wanted to encourage young people to grow and eat more nutritious and healthy foods. She had no experience of gardening when she started this project!

Zakiya McKenzie – poet, activist, nature writer

Zakiya was one of the Forestry Commission's Writers in Residence. Her collection of poems and short stories, created while living and working in nature, is called 'Forest Collection' and can be read by clicking www.forestryengland.uk/zakiya-mckenzie

Born in London and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, she now lives in Bristol and encourages young, multi-cultural young people into nature via her Green and Black Project.





What you can do.....

Our planet needs young people who care about plants and green spaces.

ANYONE can be a botanist or plant scientist – there are so many ways you can be involved and they all make a difference.

Here are some of the things you can do:

- Grow a little potted plant on your windowsill
- Plant a few wildflower seeds in your or a friend's garden
- Find out where your local community garden is and join in
- Ask your school if you can grow a few plants

As Ron Finley says,

“Gardening is the most therapeutic and defiant act you can do, especially in the city – **AND** you get strawberries!”