

Dr. Marie Clark Taylor (1911 – 1990)

If you have ever looked at a leaf under a microscope, you have Dr. Marie Clark Taylor to thank. A pioneering figure in horticulture and botanical research, Taylor was the first Black woman to earn a PhD in botany and the first woman of any race to earn a science PhD at Fordham University. Her scientific research of photomorphogenesis looked at the effect photoperiods (periods of daily light) have on the development of the cells that give rise to flowers, the foundation of horticulture. Her research provided valuable information on how to provide perfect plant conditions in challenging environments and demonstrated that plants can be grown under electric lights.



But perhaps Taylor's lasting legacy is her dedication to teaching the teachers. From her time as a high school teacher to Chair of the Botany Department at Howard University, Taylor ran summer science institutes. In her first summer courses in the 1930s, she introduced the use of a light-microscope to study cells. During the 1950s and 1960s her summer courses, funded by grants from the National Science Foundation, focused on the use of botanical materials to illustrate cell life. President Lyndon B. Johnson was so impressed with her work he invited her to expand her courses abroad, leading Taylor to teach in India. Her efforts changed the way biology and botany were taught at both the high school and undergraduate levels, and it is believed she trained nearly 100,000 people. Her former colleague, and civil rights leader, Margaret Strickland Collins, PhD, remembered her as "a powerhouse who for almost three decades trained most of the botanists who came out of Howard University, and who worked tirelessly...to improve teacher training in the sciences."

ABOUT THE ARTIST | Lisa Jeanne Graf

Lisa Jeanne Graf was born in 1966 in Hartford, CT. Her first art influences were the suburban wilds of Portland, CT and then the mountains and rivers of West Cummington, MA. Currently the trees and flowers of Boston contribute to her work. After receiving a BFA from Massachusetts College of Art in painting over 25 years ago, Graf worked as a painter, illustrator, designer, animator, jeweler, potter, and sculptor. The influences that shape Graf's work include being a parent to a 15-year daughter, public policy advocacy with a focus on education, and supporting disability rights as an autistic person. Graf wants her work to offer to the world something useful, positive, and ethical.

Spanish translation coming soon.