

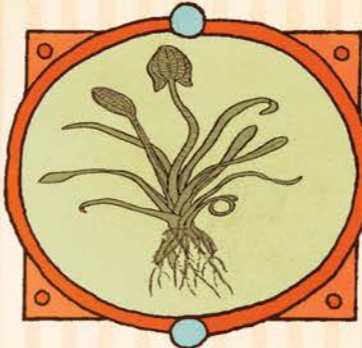
Agnes Arber

Agnes's career as a plant scientist began when she was just thirteen! Her dedication helped the world to recognise the amazing talent of women in science.

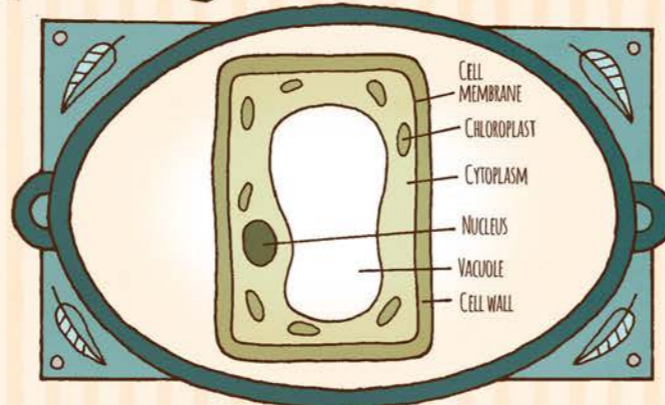


AGNES WAS BORN IN 1879 IN LONDON, ENGLAND

Agnes was born into a family of explorers, scientists, academics and artists. Her mother encouraged her to find out about plants, and her father began giving her drawing lessons when she was three years old.



At thirteen, Agnes saw a picture of a plant cell in a book. It was the first time she had heard about the tiny building blocks that all living things are made of.



Agnes was fascinated and decided to learn as much as she could about plants. Her study of a garden plant – the ivy-leaved toadflax – was published in the school magazine.



One day, a plant scientist called Ethel Sargant gave a talk to the science club at Agnes's school. She saw how much Agnes loved botany and invited her to work in her lab in the holidays.

After university, Agnes began working as Ethel's research assistant, comparing different seedlings. She became an expert in seedlings that have just one leaf – known as monocotyledons (say *mon-oh-cot-il-ee-dons*).



THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF FLOWERING PLANTS. MONOCOTYLEDONS HAVE SEEDLINGS WITH ONE LEAF. DICOTYLEDONS (SAY DY-COT-IL-EE-DONS) HAVE SEEDLINGS WITH TWO LEAVES.



Agnes spent more than 50 years studying plants. She looked closely at the different parts and recorded them in amazing illustrations. She also studied the parts you can only see under a microscope.



Agnes was brilliant at describing her science in a way that other people could understand. She published eight books and 93 scientific papers!



In 1946, Agnes was the first woman botanist (and the third woman ever) to become a fellow of the Royal Society, one of the most famous groups of scientists in the world.



The whole wide field of research lies waiting to be explored, and no other 'open sesame' is needed but the single-minded desire to discover truth for its own sake.



When the lab that Agnes worked at was closed, she was determined to keep studying plants. She took the equipment home and set up her own lab in a bedroom. It was cramped and there was no electricity, but she kept on making new observations and discoveries!

In later life, Agnes wrote about how scientists work. She helped to define what it means to be a scientist.

