



2020 NATIONAL INVENTORS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Born: Sept. 10, 1954

Primary Connection:

- North Carolina State University: Emerita Professor, 1983-2018

Education:

- Texas A&M University: Bachelor's Degree, Horticulture Science, 1977; Master's Degree, Horticulture Science, 1979
- Oregon State University: Ph.D., Horticulture Science, 1983

Key Memberships/Awards:

- North Carolina State University: Innovator of the Year, 2015
- International Society for Horticultural Science: Fellow, 2010
- American Society for Horticultural Science: Outstanding Researcher Award, 2007
- American Floral Endowment: Peer Reviewer

10 Things You Need to Know About

Sylvia Blankenship

Inventor of 1-MCP for Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Freshness

U.S. PATENT NO. 5,518,988

1. Though Blankenship grew up in Northern Virginia, her family spent summers at a ranch in Texas.
2. As a child, she enjoyed reading the adventurous stories of figures like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett.
3. Blankenship says her interest in horticulture largely comes from spending time gardening with her mother.
4. Blankenship was drawn to a career in horticulture because of her love of plants and desire to work outside.
5. She considered pursuing a degree in animal science but felt she would be too sympathetic to become a veterinarian.
6. Before taking her first full-time position at North Carolina State University (NCSU), she completed her doctorate at Oregon State University.
7. Blankenship met her future co-inventor, Edward Sisler, by consistently visiting his lab across campus at NCSU and observing his work with ethylene.
8. Blankenship's background working with apple growers gave her insight into how 1-MCP could benefit the produce industry.
9. Blankenship often uses the analogy of a lock and key to describe how ethylene inhibitors work, explaining that when 1-MCP is the key in the lock, ethylene is prevented from being there at the same time.
10. She holds two U.S. patents.