



# Meet the Scientist!



A plant ecologist studies the way plants interact with their environment and with other organisms, including other plants.

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### Important Scientist Characteristics:

Curiosity and creativity are very important. A scientist has to be curious to notice events going on around them. Scientists have to be creative to understand the significance of the events before any data are collected or any analysis is conducted. Once data are analyzed, creativity helps provide an explanation.

### Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:

How do Oregon white oak trees “determine” how many acorns to produce each year? I found that large crops of acorns follow a cold winter and a dry spring season. The oak trees also require plenty of late summer soil moisture.

### Technology or equipment used in research:

I often have to measure trees. I use an instrument that uses sound to measure my distance from the tree and the angle from me to the top of the tree. The device uses these two numbers to calculate the tree’s height.

### Most Exciting Discovery

I discovered that a dense forested area had not always been that way. Over 150 years ago, the forest had been an open savanna that Native Americans kept open and free of trees. They did this by burning it every few years. Fire created habitat for plants other than trees, and these plants were important for food and basketry.

### When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

My parents encouraged my curiosity, and my dad often took me hiking and camping. I knew at an early age that I wanted to work in a natural environment. By high school, I knew I wanted to study a natural science. In college, I became focused on plant ecology.

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