



VILLANOVA
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Contact: Carolyn Belardo 215 299-1043, belardo@ansp.org

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FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT GREGOR MENDEL AND THE RISE OF GENETICS

PHILADELPHIA—Gregor Mendel was a friar who spent eight years cross-breeding peas. His modest story is a far cry from the work of modern geneticists, yet this “father of genetics” laid down the basic laws of inheritance that have guided generations of scientists as well as creators of science fiction. Visitors can learn more by visiting “Gregor Mendel: Planting the Seeds of Genetics,” May 24 - September 28, 2008, presented by Villanova University and The Academy of Natural Sciences, at the Academy.

Here are some fascinating facts to get you started:

- Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) was the first to conduct broad, thorough, systematic and sufficiently rigorous experiments to discern any universal laws governing inheritance.
- In addition to being a scientist, Mendel was an Augustinian friar, mathematician, naturalist, botanist, meteorologist and astronomer—the ultimate Renaissance man.
- The other great 19th century biologist Charles Darwin lived around the same time as Mendel. But while Darwin briefly studied to be an Anglican clergyman and later became rich and famous in his lifetime, Mendel, a vowed religious in the Order of St. Augustine, was known primarily by a small circle of scholars and did not become rich and famous in his lifetime.
- In 1865, Mendel presented the results of his pea plant hybridizing experiments that laid out the basic laws of inheritance. But this ground-breaking work was not fully appreciated until the turn of the century when it was rediscovered by other botanists.
- Mendel Medals are awarded by the Czech Academy of Science, the German Academy of Natural Scientists and the Genetics Society of Great Britain. The Academy of Natural Sciences’ Dr. Ruth Patrick was the 2002 recipient of Villanova University’s Mendel Medal for a lifetime’s contribution to science.
- Even though he failed his teaching certification test—twice—Mendel taught natural science to high school students.
- Mendel chose the simple garden pea, *Pisum sativum*, for his exhaustive experiments because its seeds were readily available; the plants were easy to grow; pollination is relatively straightforward and controllable; and several physical characteristics are easy to distinguish.

More information: www.ansp.org/mendel and <http://www.villanova.edu/artsci/college/about/awards/mendelmedal/>

This exhibition was developed by The Field Museum, Chicago, in partnership with The Vereinigung zur Förderung der Genomforschung in Vienna, Austria and The Mendel Museum in Brno, Czech Republic

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The Academy is located at 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and weekends until 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children ages 3–12, seniors, students with college I.D. and military personnel, and free for children under 3. There is a \$2 fee for “Butterflies!”