

Dentons Celebrates Black Botanists Week

July 10, 2020

Dentons' Intellectual Property and Technology (IPT) practice joins the International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT) in celebrating Black Botanists Week, July 6–11. This week, we take a moment to recognize the need for diversity in botany by sharing Henry Blair's accomplishments and contribution to the space.

Our IPT team honors Henry Blair, the second Black person to be a named inventor on a U.S. Patent. Henry Blair was a named inventor on U.S. Patent No. 8447X for a Seed Planter on October 14, 1834. His seed planter device enabled farmers to plant crop seeds more efficiently. Blair's second patent, which issued on August 31, 1836, was for a Cotton-Planter.

Henry Blair was born in 1807 in Glen Ross, Maryland. It is assumed that Mr. Blair was born a free man, because the Patent Act of 1836 prevented enslaved persons from registering patents prevented and slave owners from taking the required patent oath.¹ After his death in 1860, the Civil Rights Act of 1871 enabled Black inventors to be named as inventors on US patents.

This week and every week, we celebrate Black inventors and acknowledge the need for increased diversity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). We especially recognize the need for more Black botanists and patent inventors in botany and plant sciences.

1. See, Brian L. Frye, *Invention of a Slave*, 68 Syracuse L. Rev. 181 (2018). ↩

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