

ASPB Pioneer Member

Janet Slovin

Dr. Janet P. Slovin is a true pioneer whose career integrates molecular, biochemical, physiological, and genetic approaches to unravel the fundamental mechanisms of plant development. Described by colleagues as a “scientist’s scientist,” she is celebrated not only for her rigorous research but also for her steadfast dedication to equity and her non-traditional, foundational path through the scientific community.

Dr. Slovin’s research at the USDA-ARS Genetic Improvement of Fruit and Vegetables Laboratory has advanced our understanding of hormone signaling, development, and stress responses in crops. Early in her career, she was instrumental in developing model systems to study the auxin regulation of plant development. Working with *Lemna gibba*, she described the first plant mutant in indole-3-acetic acid (IAA) levels and later helped characterize the tryptophan-independent pathway to IAA, demonstrating how environmental factors dictate which biosynthetic pathways plants utilize.

Beyond her hormone research, Dr. Slovin made important discoveries in plant stress tolerance, becoming the first to prove the involvement of low molecular weight heat shock proteins in thermotolerance. She also developed the inbred lines that enabled the assembly of the *Fragaria vesca* (woodland strawberry) genome. Through one of the first “crowd-sourced” sequencing



efforts, her collaborative effort established *F. vesca* as a vital reference plant, providing genomic tools for the entire Rosaceae research community.

Dr. Slovin has also been a foundational advocate for women in plant biology. She was instrumental in forming the Women in Plant Physiology/Biology group within ASPB. At the USDA, she bravely fought for equality, enduring significant professional and emotional costs to win a landmark EEOC discrimination case. Her resilience and willingness to challenge systemic barriers have paved the way for future generations, cementing her legacy as a role model who fiercely defends the value women bring to science and society.

Throughout her career, Dr. Slovin has been deeply committed to training the next generation. She is a founding member and organizer of the first Mid-Atlantic Plant Molecular Biology Society (1984) and served as the ASPB Mid-Atlantic Section Representative from 1998 to 2001. Her passion for education shines through her extensive community outreach, including the American Chemical Society’s “Kids in Chemistry” program and White

House Easter Egg events. Whether mentoring K-12 teachers to incorporate new science tools into their classrooms or guiding scientists at the USDA-ARS, Dr. Slovin’s impact on the scientific community is as enduring as her research.