

Jill Farrant

Biographic sketch

Jill Farrant is a Professor and holds a research chair in Plant Molecular Physiology in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of Cape Town. She is an acknowledged world leader in the field of plant desiccation tolerance, working on both seeds and resurrection plants. Her fundamental research involves use of a systems biology approach (using techniques in molecular biology, biochemistry, cell biology and physiology) to understand the protection mechanisms laid down in orthodox seeds and vegetative tissue of resurrection plants, with the ultimate aim of using key protectants identified to make drought tolerant crops. She has received considerable recognition for her research, obtaining the President’s award in 1993 and NRF A rating in 2009. Some of her awards include the SA Biological Society medal for the best MSc in the country (1986); the South African Association’s bronze (1993) and Silver (2007) medals for excellence in Botany; the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Fellowship (2009); the Department of Science and Technology Distinguished Women in Science award (2010), the L’Oreal-UNESCO award in life sciences (2012) that recognizes women whose exceptional careers in science have “opened up new and sometimes revolutionary ways of improving human well-being” and recently the EPFL WISH Foundation Erma Hamburger award (2015) for outstanding research and for being a role model to botanists world wide. She is a member of the Academy of Sciences of South Africa (MASSAf) Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa (RSSAf), University of Cape Town, the British Royal Society of Biology and the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). Jill Farrant is an associate editor for Frontiers in Plant Biotechnology, Plant Growth Regulation and the South African Journal of Botany and is a reviewer for numerous international journals. She collaborates widely with researchers locally and in various countries around the world. Fiercely passionate about academia, she has graduated 19 PhD and 32 MSc students and currently is supervisor of 16 PhD and 4 MSc students. She has been highly active in the mentoring of students and facilitating funding for them via the Equity Development Programme in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at UCT, and recently by acting as Jury president for L’Oreal- UNESCO Sub-Saharan Africa Fellowships.

Nationally, Jill Farrant has been named in a City Press compilation of 100 World Class South Africans, and was featured in the SABC3 TV programs “I am Woman, Leap of Faith”, “21 ICONS”, a showcase for the South African spirit in which tribute is paid to “the men and women who have helped to shape our country and, indeed, our world” and the BBC series “the genius behind” in which “the most amazing and sometimes little known technological and scientific breakthroughs of modern times, and the innovative minds *behind* them” are portrayed.