

Mikhail Semyonovich Tsvet (Also Tswett)

Encyclopedia Article

Mikhail Semyonovich Tsvet (Also Tswett)

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1872-1919

Russian botanist who developed the chromatography method for extracting plant pigments from leaves. Tsvet received his doctorate in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1896, as well as a degree from the University of Kazan, Russia, in 1901. He was hired as a laboratory assistant at the University of Warsaw, and in 1908 began teaching botany and microbiology at the Warsaw Technical University. In 1917, he became director of the botanical garden at Yuryev (later Tartu) University in Estonia. Tsvet is known as "the father of chromatography," the technique he developed for separating plant pigments from leaves by passing a solution of ether and alcohol through a chalk column. He published two papers describing his method in 1906. Tsvet discovered several new forms of the green plant pigment chlorophyll, as well as carotenoids, the pigments that give many fruits and flowers their color.