

Just before Oscars, plant named for hero of "The Martian"

February 25 2016, by Malcolm Ritter



This 2015 photo provided by Bucknell University shows student Emma Frawley with *solanum watneyi* plants in the Rooke Science Center Greenhouse of the school in Lewisburg, Pa. In a paper published Thursday, Feb. 24, 2016 in the journal *PhytoKeys*, scientists named the flowering Australian plant for Mark Watney, the fictional botanist played by Matt Damon in the movie "The Martian." (Brett Simpson/Bucknell University via AP)

Matt Damon may not win the Oscar for best actor on Sunday, but the

character he played in "The Martian" has gotten its own recognition.

In a paper published Thursday in the journal *PhytoKeys*, scientists named a flowering Australian plant for Mark Watney, the fictional botanist Damon portrayed.

The plant is dubbed *solanum watneyi* (soh-LAY'-num WAHT-nee-eye). It's related to the potato, which Watney grew on Mars as he puzzled out how to survive being stranded.



This June 1, 2015 photo provided by Chris Martine shows the plant *solanum watneyi* in Lewisburg, Pa. In a paper published Thursday, Feb. 24, 2016 in the journal *PhytoKeys*, scientists named the flowering Australian plant for Mark Watney, the fictional botanist played by Matt Damon in the movie "The Martian." (Chris Martine via AP)

The journal article demonstrates that the plant represents a [distinct species](#). One author, Chris Martine of Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, said the name reflects the film's demonstration that "through the scientific process there are ... lots of things we can still learn."

Besides, he said, [botanists](#) don't have many "blockbuster Hollywood space heroes."

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