What are Mizzou scientists asking about the eclipse?

The University of Missouri has put together several information sheets that highlight what our scientists, researchers and specialists will be studying and observing before, during and after the eclipse. While many scientists will be looking at the sun, others will be looking at what’s happening on earth. They offer ideas for simple experiments and observations you can do on your own, too.

One researcher, Dr. Mannie Liscum, explains his passion for science.

I got my start in science by being a curious kid, asking questions about the world around me and trying to understand how things work. I grew up on a dairy farm in upper state New York and wanted to be a veterinarian until I went to college and took a class about plants. I realized we know a lot less about plants than we do about animals, and I wanted to learn more.

I was fascinated that plants are stuck where they are and yet there are plants like sequoia trees that are hundreds of years old. Plants can’t get up and run away from a predator. They can’t go to McDonald’s and get a meal. They have to produce their energy on site wherever they are and adapt to any change — whether that’s a lack of light, lack of water, lack of nutrients or some plant-eating insect, animal or person coming along. How do they survive?

The value of curiosity

That curiosity drives a lot of questions and research that in my case looks at how plants respond and adapt to changes in light.

We know that plants adapt really well to changes in light. We’re trying to understand how those changes affect their ability to sense and adapt to many other changes in their environment. Our goal is to use what we learn about how plants work for crop improvements and other discoveries that will benefit the citizens of Missouri and beyond.

That’s why when there is a solar eclipse and the sudden absence of light during the day, scientists want to study what happens, whatever their area of interest or research. It’s a chance for everyone to ask questions.

What questions will you ask? What do you want to learn?

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

missouri.edu/eclipse