

## **Book review: Ferdinand Albin Pax i dzieło jego życia / Ferdinand Albin Pax und sein Lebenswerk**

Author: Lack, Hans Walter

Source: Willdenowia, 51(3) : 353-354

Published By: Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin (BGBM)

URL: <https://doi.org/10.3372/wi.51.51303>

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## Book review: Ferdinand Albin Pax i dzieło jego życia / Ferdinand Albin Pax und sein Lebenswerk

Hans Walter Lack<sup>1</sup>

Version of record first published online on 16 November 2021 ahead of inclusion in December 2021 issue.

**Book details:** Mularczyk M., Ferdinand Albin Pax i dzieło jego życia / Ferdinand Albin Pax und sein Lebenswerk. – Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT; Dresden: Neisse Verlag. – ISBN 978-83-7977-521-7, ISBN 978-3-86276-315-3, ISBN 978-83-938338-6-3. – 14 × 20.5 cm, 121 pages, 41 illustrations, softback. – Price: EUR 18. – Available at <https://www.neisseverlag.de/>

**Citation:** Lack H. W. 2021: Book review: Mularczyk M., Ferdinand Albin Pax i dzieło jego życia / Ferdinand Albin Pax und sein Lebenswerk. – Willdenowia 51: 353–354. <https://doi.org/10.3372/wi.51.51303>

This is the first biography of Ferdinand Albin Pax (1858–1942), professor of botany at Breslau [now Wrocław] University and director of its botanical garden from 1893 until 1926. It is bilingual publication, with the original Polish text by Magdalena Mularczyk printed on the verso pages, while the German translation by Jerzy Woźnak appears on the recto pages. Co-editors of this volume are the Niemieckie Towarzystwo Kulturalno-Społeczne we Wrocławiu [German Social-Cultural Society in Wrocław] and the Ogród Botaniczny Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego [Botanical Garden of Wrocław University]. The logo of the consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany in Opole on the back cover indicates additional support for this publication. Because the present reviewer is ignorant of the Polish language, his report is entirely based on the German text, which is perfectly clear and written in good style.

The biographical part of this book consists of only two chapters “Sohn des Gebirges” [Son of the mountains] (pp. 7–29) and “Tätigkeit” [Activity] (pp. 31–73). This is followed by a list of the publications by Pax as author (pp. 75–102) and, separately, as co-author (pp. 104–111), with all titles given in the German original and in a Polish translation. The bibliography (pp. 112–117), with all titles given in the Polish original and a German translation, the list of illustrations (pp. 118–121) and the illustrations themselves are placed at the end of the volume. The latter consist of black-and-white and colour photographs of the key figures of the text, of buildings, gardens, herbarium specimens and title pages.

Judging from Mularczyk’s text, she has studied all these materials in detail over years plus the pre-existing biographical accounts on Pax, in particular those by his students Alexandru Borza, Richard Kräusel, Alexander von Lingelsheim and Käthe Hoffmann. In addition, she was able to collect further information from Gabriele

Pax (1925–2017), the granddaughter of Pax, to whom this volume has been dedicated. As a consequence, the reader is informed about many aspects of the botanical garden and the botanical museum of Breslau University during Pax’s time in office, which as a matter of fact lasted for more years than any of his predecessors and successors in the chair. For all Berlin-based botanists, Pax’s association with Adolf Engler is of particular interest. Pax was one of his assistants in Kiel and Breslau, where he got his Habilitation. Later, he moved with Engler to Berlin and for the rest of his life contributed to the major projects initiated by the latter, among them *Die natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien*, *Das Pflanzenreich*, *Die natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien II* and *Die Vegetation der Erde*. In agreement with the traditions of his time, Pax was a specialist for several plant families, notably *Aceraceae*, *Euphorbiaceae* and *Primulaceae*, but he treated several more for both editions of *Die natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien*. In addition, he was geographically focused on the Carpathians, resulting first in his *Grundzüge der Pflanzenverbreitung in den Karpathen* in two volumes for *Die Vegetation der Erde*, a series edited by Engler and Oscar Drude, and subsequently in his *Pflanzengeographie von Rumänien*. Mularczyk deals also with Pax’s teaching commitment and includes a list of his PhD students, among them celebrities like Friedrich Fedde and Hubert Winkler; she does not omit Pax’s role in the “Schlesische Gesellschaft für vaterländische Kultur” [Silesian Society for patriotic culture] and his excursions undertaken with students in the Sudetes and Carpathians. Pax’s textbook *Allgemeine Morphologie der Pflanzen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Blütenmorphologie* is also dealt with in this text just like his palaeobotanical papers, his *Bibliographie der schlesischen Botanik* and his guide book to the botanic garden under his care.

<sup>1</sup> Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin, Königin-Luise-Str. 6–8, 14195 Berlin, Germany; [h.w.lack@bo.berlin](mailto:h.w.lack@bo.berlin)

Admittedly there are a few demerits: the number of anecdotes included in the text could have been reduced without interfering with the main arguments; in some cases Mularczyk's approach is slightly hagiographical. Furthermore, it would have been of interest to compare Pax with the other contributors to Engler's projects and learn more about the herbarium material collected by him. Judging from the JACQ database, this is more widespread than indicated in the text, with specimens kept in, e.g., B, GJO, GZU, JE and PI. By contrast, the long list of Pax's publications is a mine of information, although in a few cases Mularczyk got lost in the bibliographical intricacies of *Die natürlichen Pflanzenfamilien II*. From a purely typographical point of view, the pagination is missing on several pages, i.e. pp. 117–121.

All this, however, is outweighed by the fact that the life and work of one of the lesser-known figures of plant taxonomy in Germany has been presented in a comprehensive and highly readable way. At the same time, the volume forms a welcome addition to the first volume of *Historia Ogródu Botanicznego Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego* (Mularczyk 1998), so far available only in Polish.

## References

- Mularczyk M. 1998: *Historia Ogródu Botanicznego Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego* 1. – *Prace Ogródu Bot. Uniw. Wrocławsk.* **4(1)**.

## Willdenowia

Open-access online edition [bioone.org/journals/willdenowia](https://bioone.org/journals/willdenowia)



Online ISSN 1868-6397 · Print ISSN 0511-9618 · 2020 Journal Impact Factor 0.985

Published by the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin

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