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Preface

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Preface

On the occasion of Werner Greuter's 68th birthday those of his colleagues studying the systematics and floristics of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Cuba and the Caribbean present samples of their work in appreciation of his contribution to their common field of research.

Prof. Dr Werner Greuter, born on 27 February 1938 in Genua, will retire as First Director of the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem on 31 March 2006, having reached retirement age. With his departure, this institution will lose its most outstanding member of staff, who did so much to shape its development during an era of major expansion.

Within a year of taking up his post on 1 April 1978, he organized an international scientific meeting to celebrate the tercentenary of the Berlin botanic garden. This event was the precursor of a much larger venture, the XIV International Botanical Congress held 24 July-1 August 1987 in Berlin. During this Congress, another of his achievements neared completion, namely the reconstruction of the Collection Wing of the Museum Building, for which the curators had to wait 44 years despite the Wirtschaftswunder, providing unprecedented space for the herbarium and library.

At the same time, he was responsible, as its founder, first Secretary General, then President, for the Organisation for the Phyto-Taxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area (OPTIMA)

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and for a research project to provide an inventory of all the vascular plants of that area, Med-Checklist. In 1988, he co-founded the Flora Hellenica project, to which he and his collaborators at the BGBM contributed many years of experience.

He used the opportunities provided by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to negotiate the return of the important "Ausserrheinisches Herbar", which after World War II was housed in the former East Berlin, together with a considerable number of scientific staff formerly at BHU. An important consequence turned out to be the introduction of a new research project, the Flora of Cuba, for which he managed to initiate the publication of taxonomic treatments. In 1994, as another consequence of the fall of the Wall, he had to negotiate a change in the affiliation of the BGBM, from an institution under the direction of the Senator for Science and Research, to a Central Facility of the Freie Universität Berlin on 1 January 1995.

His interest in the development of electronic and other new tools of potential value for systematic botany deserves special mention. At a time when even floppy discs were still largely unknown, BGBM's journal "Willdenowia" was in 1980 already processed electronically, on a composer, and serious plans for a computer network were in hand as early as 1986; our EDP facilities are now envied worldwide and its staff attracts quite substantial funding. The documentation and electronic administration of the living collections always received his full support, resulting in one of the world's most diverse collections of living plants of documented wild origin, and without his dedication the recently installed laboratory for molecular taxonomy, plus permanent staff, would have remained a dream.

His extraordinary ability to use various classical and modern languages besides his Swiss mother tongues of German, French and Italian, and his insatiable interest in pre- and post-Linnean botanical literature made him the ideal editor of a number of important periodicals in systematic botany and taxonomy, and of other international scientific publications. He has a worldwide reputation in matters of Botanical Nomenclature and served for eighteen years (1981-1999) as Rapporteur-Général for botanical nomenclature of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy. In the IAPT Council he served as Secretary and managed the International Bureau for Plant Taxonomy and Nomenclature in Berlin. In addition to initiating, organising and finalising scientific activities on local, national and international scales, he has found time for extensive fieldwork, in areas with a Mediterranean-type climate, in particular Greece, and more recently in the Caribbean.

The aim of this special issue of "Willdenowia" is to reflect the many aspects of Werner Greuter's scientific personality. The topics covered relate to: the taxonomy and nomenclature of *Boraginaceae, Chenopodiaceae, Compositae, Cyperaceae* and *Orchidaceae;* the function of the Berlin Botanic Garden as a possible source of vascular plant invasions to its surrounding areas; the taxonomic and floristic results gained in different regions of particular interest to Werner Greuter, namely the Mediterranean part of Europe (Spain, Corsica, Sicily, continental Italy, former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Greece and the Aegean in particular), N Africa (Morocco), and SW Asia (Asia Minor and the Arabian Peninsula); tropical botany focusing on the Greater Antilles, especially Cuba, and ethnobotanical results from New Guinea; a cryptogamic section which addresses diatoms, mosses and lichens as major groups, and again focuses on the Mediterranean Area (Greece, Egypt); essays on, and new insights into, the history of botany, particularly the work of important collectors and botanists (F. X. Berger, Bonpland, Fraas, Humboldt, Kotschy, Kunth, Stephani, Zorn von Plobsheim, F. Zuccarini). All in all, 103 of his friends, colleagues and students have contributed 57 articles to celebrate the achievements of our First Director. The editors are most grateful to all of them, as well as to the many reviewers and the Museum staff, for their invaluable and essential support, to provide a Festschrift that is a fitting tribute to an eminent botanist.

We wish him good health and many more productive years in the service of Systematic Botany and trust that he will continue to maintain his strong links with our institution.

The Editors

Harrie Sipman, Thomas Raus, Norbert Kilian

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