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175<sup>e</sup> anniversaire du Jardin botanique de Genève

Colloque international sur le thème

## Nature et Jardins botaniques au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle

Genève — 2-4 juin 1993

# Association of Euro-Asian Botanical Gardens and its International Links

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## ABSTRACT

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The Association of Euro-Asian Botanical Gardens (AEABG) was set up in April 1992 at the Constituent Conference of representatives of the botanical gardens located in the former USSR. The Association was established as a successor of the Council of the USSR botanical gardens formed in 1952 to unite and to co-ordinate the scientific and instructive activity of 125 botanical gardens of the former Soviet Union affiliated to different departments (Academies of Sciences, Universities, Agricultural, Medical, Pedagogic institutes).

The majority of the botanical gardens and arboreta members of the Russian Council of the botanical gardens and its regional divisions (Siberia and Far East, Ural and Volga regions, Russia European part and others), as well as the associations of the botanical gardens of Central Asia, Ukrainia and Moldavia, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan and others, have entered the Association. Already in 1992 the Association took part in arranging 4 scientific conferences dealing with various aspects of the activity of the botanical gardens. These conferences were held in Moscow, Samara, Stavropol (Russia) and Minsk (Byelorussia).

AEABG continues good traditions of the USSR Council of the botanical gardens in uniting the activity of its members, in concentrating their work making one system of documentation of living plant collections, in elaborating joint projects on biodiversity, conservation with the priority given to the protection of rare and endangered plant species, in creating seed banks of the native plants, in working out common data-base programs on plant collections and other important problems of the botanical gardens.

The USSR Council of the botanical gardens has established good scientific contacts with different botanical institutions and scientists in many countries of the world. Particularly productive was our co-operation with botanists in India and USA. Many field trips have been carried out in these countries and USSR. Now the Association continues to work actively in this direction, paying special attention to specific scientific contacts between individual botanical gardens and scientists. As a

result of this work independent scientific links between the Main botanical garden RAS, various botanical gardens of CIS have been established with botanical gardens, universities and scientists in USA, France, Germany, Korea, Slovakia, Poland and other countries.

Establishing international links among the botanical gardens has a paramount importance and ensures the success of their work.

#### RÉSUMÉ

ANDREEV, L. N. (1993). Association des Jardins botaniques euro-asiatiques et ses liaisons internationales.

Comptes-rendus du colloque "Nature et Jardins botaniques au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle", Genève, 2-4 juin 1993.  
*Boissiera* 47: 81-86.

L'Association des Jardins botaniques euro-asiatiques (AEABG) a été établie en avril 1992, lors de la Conférence constitutive des représentants des jardins botaniques situés dans l'ancienne URSS. L'Association a été établie pour succéder au Conseil des Jardins botaniques de l'URSS formé en 1952 afin d'unir et de coordonner l'activité scientifique et éducative des 125 jardins botaniques de l'ancienne Union Soviétique, affiliés aux différents départements (Académie des Sciences, Universités, Agriculture, Médecine, Instituts pédagogiques).

La majorité des jardins botaniques et arboretums du Conseil russe des jardins botaniques et ses divisions régionales (Sibérie et Extrême-Orient, les régions de l'Oural et de la Volga, parties de la Russie européenne et autres) ainsi que les Associations des Jardins botaniques d'Asie centrale, d'Ukraine et de Moldavie, de Biélorussie, du Kazakhstan et autres, se sont jointes à l'Association des Jardins botaniques euro-asiatiques. En 1992, déjà, l'Association a participé à l'organisation de quatre conférences scientifiques ayant trait aux différents aspects des activités des jardins botaniques. Ces conférences se sont déroulées à Moscou, Samara, Stavropol (Russie) et Minsk (Biélorussie).

Ainsi, l'AEABG poursuit les bonnes traditions du Conseil des Jardins botaniques de l'URSS en unifiant les activités de ses membres, en concentrant leurs travaux sur l'établissement d'un même système de documentation des collections de plantes vivantes, en élaborant des projets communs sur la conservation de la biodiversité, priorité étant consacrée à la protection des espèces de plantes menacées et en voie de disparition, en créant des banques de graines pour les plantes locales, en organisant des banques de données communes sur les collections de plantes et autres problèmes des jardins botaniques.

Le Conseil de l'URSS des jardins botaniques a établi de bons contacts scientifiques avec les différents instituts botaniques et scientifiques en de nombreux pays du monde. Notre coopération avec des botanistes aux Indes et aux Etats-Unis a été tout particulièrement fructueuse. De nombreux déplacements sur le terrain ont été effectués dans ces pays et en URSS. Aujourd'hui, l'Association continue de travailler activement dans cette direction, en mettant l'accent tout particulièrement sur des contacts scientifiques spécifiques entre les jardins botaniques individuels et les scientifiques. Par suite de ce travail, des liens scientifiques indépendants ont été développés entre le Jardin botanique principal RAS, divers jardins botaniques de la Communauté des Etats Indépendants (CIS) avec des jardins botaniques, des universités et des scientifiques aux USA, en France, Allemagne, Corée, Slovaquie, Pologne et d'autres pays.

L'établissement de liens internationaux entre les jardins botaniques revêt une importance primordiale et assure le succès de leurs travaux.

I would like to begin with the heartfelt thanks to Professor Spichiger for his kind invitation to take part in the colloquium celebrating a remarkable event in the history of the world of botany — the 175th anniversary of the Geneva Botanical Conservatory and Garden. For me it is also a great honor to give a lecture here since the oldest and most unique botanical garden in Geneva was founded by an outstanding botanist Professor Augustin Pyrame De Candolle who would have been 215 years old this year. Together with his son, for their great contribution to botany, they were elected to the Petersburg Academy of Sciences. Later in 1835, the father De Candolle was elected as Honorary member of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences.

Mentioning these facts, I would like to stress again that existing international links among the botanical gardens are based on traditional close contacts of botanists in various countries. In particular, the works of father and son De Candolle had a great impact on the development of botany in Russia, especially in the field of taxonomy and plant morphology.

Turning now to the subject of my lecture, I have to start again with the history of formation and development of the botanical gardens in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Despite of the fact that the first botanical gardens appeared in Russia about three centuries ago, there were only 20 of them in the beginning of this century. That included the oldest ones of Moscow State University, Petersburg pharmaceutical garden, Nikita botanical garden. We gratefully revere the memory of famous botanists — founders of the botanical gardens in Russia: Prof. Steven, Fisher, Regel, Beketov, Krasnov, Komarov, Lipskiy and many others. Their talent, erudition and energy have yielded fruitful results.

The thirties and forties in the former Soviet Union were marked with the establishment of the largest botanical gardens in Omsk, Rostov on Don, Alma-Ata, Baku, Dushanbe, Kiev, Minsk, Ekaterinburg, Ufa and other cities. It may be explained by the fact that the role of the botanical gardens in conservation of the native flora and enrichment of the cultivated flora was generally recognized. Before the Second World war such unique institutions as the Polar-Alpine botanical garden (to the North of the Polar Circle) and the Pamirs botanical garden (specific Alpine conditions) were founded. After this war two other botanical gardens in Tashkent and in Moscow (Main botanical garden) were laid down.

The establishment of new botanical gardens during and after the war in Tashkent, Moscow, Novosibirsk and other cities necessitated more close cooperation between the gardens in seed and plant exchange programs for setting up their collections. It was also necessary to form a council coordinating the activity of the botanical gardens. Initiated by the Main Botanical Garden, such a body was established and registered as the Council of the Botanical Gardens under the aegis of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in 1952.

This Council opened a new state in the work of the Soviet botanical gardens. To improve the effectiveness of the Council of the botanical gardens the Regional Councils of the botanical gardens were formed in 1963. Siberia and the Far East, the Ural and the Volga river area, North Caucasus, Central European part and North-West of the USSR, Central Asia, Transcaucasus, Ukraine and Moldavia, Belarus, the Baltic Sea area and Kazakhstan became the locations of the new branches. As you see, the Regional Councils coordinated the work of the botanical gardens in various geographical zones.

It is necessary to mention some specific features of our botanical gardens that make them different from the botanical gardens of many other countries. In Russia and the former Soviet Union we have various botanical institutions. The research on major branches of science — taxonomy, morphology, physiology, biochemistry is usually held at the institutes of the Academy of Sciences or at the universities rather than at the botanical gardens. In view of this, the Council of the Botanical Gardens has defined, approved and coordinated functions of botanical institutes, botanical gardens and the All Union Vavilov Institute of Plant Breeding which all work on flora investigation, rational use and enrichment of plant resources.

Botanical institutes investigate problems of taxonomy and classification, study composition, structure and dynamics of plant cover, macro and micro morphology and other aspects of botany.

Botanical gardens carry out introduction of native plants, study the plants in stationary conditions, select species and forms that might be used in plant breeding, shade and landscape gardening and elaborate principles of introduction.

Because of the Council's work, plant introduction was recognized as an important section of botanical science. Methods were formulated, terminology and ways of phenological observations were unified thus allowing to summarize regional experimental data.

The Council of the Botanical Gardens has initiated active work on protection and enrichment of the cultural plant kingdom. In practice almost all the botanical gardens of the USSR paid great attention to growing plants native to their local and other floras. The Gardens have accumulated great experience in growing native plants. Therefore, two special conferences were held in 1971 and 1974 to discuss problems of protection of the gene fund through the cultivation of rare plant species. Already in 1977-78 we collected information, showing that 94 botanical gardens of the former USSR cultivated 1117 endangered species of vascular plants.

I would like to mention that from the very beginning the Council has contributed a lot to extend international scientific relations among the botanical gardens. The most significant results of this cooperation have been achieved in the sixties and seventies in the joint Soviet-Indian expeditions. We have enriched our collections with 3000 seed samples, more than 6500 plants and more than 6500 herbarium sheets from India.

Since 1976 we cooperate with American botanical gardens. Twenty-five field trips have been arranged in two countries under the Interstate Agreement on Environmental Protection and the joint project "Endangered plant species and introduction of rare species". More than 2000 seed samples, 1000 living plant samples and 25.000 herbarium sheets have been collected in the USA. The mentioned cooperation, besides these joint field trips, stipulates exchange in information on extinct and endangered plant species and elaboration of joint scientific programs of cultivation of rare and endangered species in both countries. This cooperation developed through several stages. The first one in 1976-1980 was a stage of mutual acquaintance with the floras and scientists of both countries. It has been completed with the joint publication "Introduction and protection of plants in the USSR and the USA". The second stage began in 1981 and resulted in the joint conference in 1989 held in Siberia. The reports presented at this conference have been summarized in the joint monograph "The experience of introduction and protection of plants in the USSR and the USA". This book describes the areas of plant collecting, gathered samples, plant protection policies and methods in both countries. During the realization of this joint program we established multiple bilateral projects with many botanical gardens of the United States. Among our partners I would like to mention Missouri botanical garden, Chicago botanical garden, Rancho Santa Ana in California. Our scientists take part in other international program such as Flora of China, Flora Malesiana, etc.

We succeeded in our cooperation with the Laboratory of biology and biotechnology of the University Clermont-Ferrand (France). This project is specially aimed at the elaboration of physiological principles and methods of evaluation of cold-, salt-resistance and anthropotolerance of useful plants in nature and their reproduction in vitro.

We have multiple joint research programs with the other countries. Among them our works on:

- introduction of useful plants and conservation of the gene fund — with the botanical gardens of North Korea;
- modern and fossil flora — with Poland;
- introduction of arboreal plants native to various botanical and geographical areas — with Slovakia;
- elaboration of methods for seed quality evaluation by X-ray radiography — with Bulgaria.

It is rather complicated for me to outline the difference in the activities of the Council of the Botanical Gardens of the former USSR and the new organization, created after its break-up. All the botanists apprehend the necessity of keeping such a body, which would unite and coordinate the activities of the botanical gardens on the whole territory of the former Soviet Union. This is quite evident especially in the circumstances when from the very beginning this Council worked like the institution for cooperation, information exchange and coordination of efforts of the botanical gardens. It never was a fictitious, administrative body. Only this fact may explain that right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, already in January 1992, representatives of the Botanical Gardens of Russia met at the Constituent Conference and formed The Council of the Botanical Gardens of Russia. This Council embraces 50 botanical gardens and at the same time accomplishes the functions of the Council for Plant Introduction in the ranks of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The regional structure of the new Council also remained the same on the Russian territory — we kept our branch departments in Siberia and the Far East, Ural and the Volga river area, Central-European part of Russia, its North West and Northern Caucasus. In comparatively short period of time, just about a year, we negotiated the Charter of the Council of the Botanical Gardens and the model Charter of the State botanical garden. These documents determine the basic functions of the botanical gardens, their territorial integrity and the role they play in natural plant protection and their gene fund conservation. We hope that the governmental institutions will recognize this model Charter as a standard document for the state botanical garden.

On its organizational conference the Russian Council of the Botanical Gardens has initiated the creation of the Euro-Asian Association of the Botanical Gardens to keep and develop scientific relations among the gardens of the former Soviet Union. The vast majority of the botanical gardens have welcomed this step, and in April of 1992 we held an organizational conference in the Main Botanical Garden in Moscow where the representatives of the botanical community unanimously adopted the setting up of the new Association. Today it includes the Council of the Botanical Gardens of Russia with its regional branches, Association of the Middle Asian Botanical Gardens, which joins the gardens of Uzbekistan, Turkmenia and Tadzhikistan, the Council of the Botanical Gardens of Ukraine and Moldova, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Right now we conduct the registration of all the botanical gardens, willing to join our Association. We expect that in the fall of the current year we will be able to provide the full and accurate list of its members.

We would like to hope, that the newly created Association of Euro-Asian Botanical Gardens will be recognized as a member of the International Association of the Botanical Gardens with the full rights of its regional branch. The members of our organization acknowledge the charter of IABG and determine the following activities as their major targets:

- to develop the international cooperation among the researchers and employees of the botanical gardens, dendariums and other botanical institutions to solve the problems of protection and enrichment of the wild and cultural flora;
- to perform organizational functions in development and realization of international programs and projects of scientific research and joint botanical expeditions;
- to provide aid to the researches in the field of systematization of the natural and cultural flora, protection of rare and endangered plant species by cultivating them in botanical collections, creation of seed and plant tissue culture banks;
- to develop the unified descriptions of the live plants collections, the exchange in seeds, plant samples, herbariums, scientific publications and other information;
- to expand the educational activities of the botanical gardens;

and many other practical aspects and activities.

Already in 1992, following the traditions of the former Council of the Botanical Gardens of the USSR, the newly created Council of the Botanical Gardens of Russia and the Association of Euro-Asian Botanical Gardens took part in arrangement of two conferences dedicated to the different aspects of activities of botanical gardens. In September we held a session of the Regional Council of Botanical Gardens of Ural and the Volga River areas in Russia. In November there was a session of the Council of the Botanical Gardens of Belarus. This year we already held the scientific conference in Ukraine aimed at the applied tasks of botany, particularly the improvement of the ecological situation in densely industrialized areas (Industrial botany). We are planning to arrange other conferences and symposiums in Novosibirsk, Moscow, Sochi and other cities, dedicated to other particular fields of botany.

The Council of the Botanical Gardens of Russia has initiated the works on information publications "Conspectus of Russian Dendroflora" and "Cultural Flora of Ornamental Grass Plants of Eastern Europe and Northern Asia".

Analyzing the international links of botanical gardens of the former USSR I would like to say that activities of the Council of the Botanical Gardens of the USSR permitted to establish multiple scientific contacts among botanical gardens and researchers. Most of these contacts and joint projects were funded by the centralized sources as Academy of Sciences, State Committee on Science and Technology, State Committee on Environment Protection and other governmental institutions. Because of the significant budget limitations of the Russian Academy of Sciences the vitality of this cooperation depends on energy and initiative of the researchers themselves and their ability to raise funds and get grants for the realization of particular programs. For example, with support provided by professor Peter Raven of Missouri Botanical Garden our professor Skvortsov from the Main Botanical Garden in Moscow became the recipient of the grant from the National Geographic Society. This grant funds the research expedition aimed at the Mid-Volga river area flora studies. The McArthur Foundation has financed the organizational conference of the Russian Center for Plant Protection and Research.

Unfortunately I have to say that the number of our contacts on the non-currency exchange basis decreased significantly. Now we have to pay all accomodations and travel expenses of our guest-scientists in hard currency, which is extremely expensive as compared to Rubles. But still, regardless of these problems we will plan the joint Russian-American expedition in the Russian Far East for this year.

Of course, the current economic situation in the Republics of the former USSR remains difficult and complicated, but compared to one a year ago I can say that it becomes more and more stable. Many people, including political leaders begin to realize the needs of botanical gardens and provide support to their activities. At least the leaders of the Russian Academy of Sciences, being very limited financially, try to provide this assistance to the botanical gardens of the Academy. For the first time in 48 years of existence of the Main Botanical Garden the Moscow City Government has given us very significant financial aid.

In the end of my brief report I would like to mention that the major efforts of the Council of the Botanical Gardens of Russia and the Association of Euro-Asian Botanical Gardens are still aimed at the development of international relations among botanical gardens. Only the way of international cooperation can bring us to the successful realization of our basic intention of keeping and protecting the world of plants and nature in general.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and it will be my pleasure to answer your questions.