

Tone Wraber

Vinko Strgar (1928-1992)

Dr. Vinko Strgar, Director of the Botanical Garden and Associate Professor of Systematic Botany and Ornamental Plant Science at the University of Ljubljana, died suddenly and unexpectedly on 2 March 1992. He was born as a son of a farmer on 29 July 1928 in Leskovec near Krsko (southeast Slovenia). His high school education was interrupted by the second World War. Thereafter he finished his training as a gardener and later on he completed his biology studies at the University of Ljubljana (1962). In 1969 he achieved his PhD degree in Biology with a thesis on "The geographical distribution and taxonomic differentiation of the groups *Calcaria* Deyl and *Tenuifolia* Pawłowski of the genus *Sesleria* Scop. in Croatia and Slovenia". Almost all of his working years (as of 1951) he spent at the Botanical Garden in Ljubljana of which he was made director in 1968 upon retirement of J. Lazar, a position that he held until he died. The scientific work of V. Strgar focused mainly on systematic botany and geobotany. His research extended over large areas of Slovenia, the Balkan peninsula, parts of Romania and the Apennine peninsula. He contributed greatly to the knowledge of the distribution of pteridophyta and flowering plants in Slovenia, and also devoted his attention to the adventitious flora (e. g. *Veronica filiformis*, *Datura metel*, *Reynoutria*, North American blueberries). He achieved fame in 1971 for his description of the endemic *Sempervivum juvenii*, of the *S. wulfenii* group, which had not been properly understood before. He explored the systematic relationships of the weeping willow (*Salix babylonica* s. l.) in Slovenia and the neighbouring countries (1990). His major attention was devoted to the genus *Sesleria*, which he studied in depth in Slovenia as well as in the Balkan and Apennine peninsulas. His findings, supported by observations and experiments, are included in 16 papers published between 1966 and 1991. Naturally he was also interested in the culture of endangered species and published on the results of his experiences with cultivating *Daphne blagayana*, *Rhododendron luteum* and *Degenia velebitica*. He also submitted various expert opinions on garden landscaping, among them the plan for a new botanical garden of Ljubljana which unfortunately he did not live to see. This is all the more sad since he also was the driving force behind the new university centre for biology in Ljubljana. He also made an important contribution to Slovenian botanical terminology. In countless articles he wrote about interesting gardening plants, supporting the importance of school gardens, translating and expanding various important works on gardening into Slovenian, among others *The Dictionary of garden plants in colour with house and greenhouse plants* (R. Hay & P. O. Syngé), as well as different works on phytotherapy. He also contributed to the key for the identification of plants, *Mala flora Slovenije* (1969, 1984). (A selected bibliography of V. Strgar was published in *Bioloski Vestnik* 40(1): 65-69, 1992).

Vinko Strgar was active in many areas with often unsurpassed energy and abiding by high ethical principles. The small Slovenian botanical community will deeply miss him.

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