

BOTANIST DR. RODICA RUGINĂ (1940 – 2021)



In the middle of the summer of 2021, on July the 2nd, Mrs. Rodica Rugină, one of the well-known botanists of the Botanical Garden “Anastasie Fătu” and Faculty of Biology in Iași, has passed away.

Mrs. Rodica Rugină was born on January, the 20th, 1940, in Clipicești (Vrancea county), in a family of teachers, Vasile and Paraschiva Surugiu. She attended her primary school studies in the native village, and the secondary and high-school classes in Focșani.

Between 1958 and 1963 she attended the courses of the Faculty of Biology-Geography (Biology-Botany section) of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași.

As a proof of those necessary qualities for a future researcher (seriousness, permanent study, passion in research work, etc.), between 1963 and 1967 she worked as a university preparator at the *Pharmaceutical Botany* discipline of the Faculty of Pharmacy in Iași. Later on, she transferred to the Faculty of Biology-Geography of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, where she worked also as a university preparator at *Plant Morphology*, until 1978. She began her doctorate studies in 1971 with a PhD thesis called *Morphological and histo-anatomical research for normal weeds and those modified by herbicide treatment*, under the leadership of Professor Constantin Burduja. The thesis was defended in public in 1980, thus the passionate botanist obtaining the title of doctor in biology.

Following some restructurings within the Faculty of Biology-Geography, Mrs. Rodica Rugină becomes a researcher at the Botanical Garden “Anastasie Fătu” in Iași, where she coordinated the activity of the *Taxonomic Section*, collaborating permanently with members of the team of *Morphology and Plant Anatomy* of the Faculty of Biology.

In her scientific activity she has published over 90 scientific articles in various fields of research, such as: *Comparative Anatomy (Systematic)*, *Ecological Anatomy* and *Experimental Anatomy*, with special attention paid to protected plant species and medicinal ones. Probably the most valuable work made after many years of studies is the one published in 1998, in the prestigious *Publishing House of the Romanian Academy*, together with Professor Dr. Constantin Toma, under the name: *Anatomy of Medicinal Plants. Atlas*. For her work, Mrs. Rodica Rugină was awarded the Emanoil Teodorescu Prize by the Romanian Academy, in 2000.

Mrs. Rodica Rugină has published, alone or in collaboration, some books of botanical interest, as they are: *Can the mysteries of life be solved?* (V. Rugină & R. Rugină, 1993), *Protected Plants in Romania* (R. Rugină & M. Mititiuc, 2003), *Volatile Oils and Aromatherapy* (R. Rugină & I. Boz, 2013), *The Adventure of Plants on the Globe* (R. Rugină, 2017). She made valuable contributions to the elaboration and publication of manuals for practical works for the discipline of *Plant Morphology and Anatomy*, but also for the work *Illustrated flora of vascular plants in Eastern Romania* (authors: I. Sârbu, N. Ștefan, L. Ivănescu & C. Mânzu, vol. 1, 2001).

Most of the professional activity (over 35 years) of the researcher Rodica Rugină consisted in the coordination of the *Taxonomic Section* of the Botanical Garden in Iași, a section that represents the defining element in an institution of its kind; hence the difficult responsibility in conserving and enriching the collections of characteristic plant species. In order to face the

inherent difficulties, she was involved with passion and professionalism in all activities specific to the conservation of plant species *ex situ*, as: collecting of plant material directly from the wild habitats, obtaining specimens from species as diverse as possible (through appropriate horticultural techniques) from similar institutions in the country and abroad, the identification and reviewing the vascular plant species within the collections, the collection of plants for the publication *Flora Exsiccata of Moldova and Dobrogea*. She also paid a special attention to the rare plants collected from different areas of Romania, making great efforts to adapt and even naturalize them in the conditions of the city of Iași. Field work was also accompanied by laboratory work, most cultivated species being studied in a research project, conducted over 5 years (*Studies of conservation of the genofond of rare and protected plants in Romania, their introduction and acclimatization in the Botanical Garden Iași*).

In all her activity at the Botanical Garden she contributed to increasing the diversity of plant species in the *Taxonomic Section*, but also to bring elements that increase the interest of visitors, by creating an outdoor amphitheater, a small lake for aquatic plants and an artisanal fountain. To all this we must add the involvement in guiding visitors, but also students from different fields (biology, pharmacy, agronomy, geography, etc.).

The decades she dedicated to cultivate and studying plants were marked by the passion, seriousness, tenacity and critical spirit, which she approached with all the activities carried out.

For us, her younger colleagues, she remains a real model of high scientific professionalism!

Adrian OPREA

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