

150 YEARS FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE BOTANIC GARDEN “ANASTASIE FĂTU” IN IAȘI (1856 – 2006)

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We are celebrating, this year, the foundation of the first botanic garden in Romania, here in Iași, 150 years ago. In 1856, our patriot, philanthropist and cultivated man, Anastasie Fătu, physician and naturalist in the same time, has been succeed to set up to a small botanic garden, on his own field, and with his own funds, nearby “Râpa Galbenă” in Iași. That botanic garden, had to be till the death of the great learned man, an important centre of education for all the students and pupils from Iași, thus being possible to study the Botany on “living teaching aids”, but also a very good educational point for all the nature lovers. All these nobiliary ideals of the founder of that botanic garden have been assumed, 4 years later, in 1860, by the newest University in Romania. The University from Iași, by means of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, has colaborated with Dr. Anastasie Fătu to set up a newly botanic garden, which had to correspond to the needs of their times, as well as the students. În 1871, Dr. Anastasie Fătu published in an „Index Seminum” at least 2,500 plant species, all of them being cultivated in that botanic garden. After his death, the botanic garden had started to shatter. In 1914, one of his daughter, Lucreția E. Frunzetti, sold that field, and nowadays, only two street names, namely: „*Strada Florilor*” and „*Strada Anastasie Fătu*”, has remind us of the first botanic garden in Iași.

A second location for the botanic garden has been a field just in the front of the Museum of the Natural Sciences (today, Independenței Avenue), started with 1873, on a surface of ca. 3,000 sq. m.; that field was in the property of the Society of Physicians and Naturalists from Iași. The Botanic Garden has been started also by Dr. Anastasie Fătu, but has been put „on the ground” by Dr. Dimitrie Brândză, in his quality of retentionist of the Museum. A part from the lignaceous plant species, which have been planted in that garden, are still surviving today. Among those trees, one can see: two individuals of oaks (*Quercus robur*), two individuals of white poplar (*Populus alba*), and an individual of horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).

A third location for the botanic garden has been the field situated around the former building of the Old University (today, it is the University of Medicine and Pharmacy „*Gr. T. Popa*”), after a request of the senate of the University to create a new botanic garden in Iași. Thus, in 1876, there has been initiated a third garden, having as director, Professor Dr. Cristea Buicliu. Fitting out that newly botanic garden, director sended out to the Minister of Public Education, justifications of spending 800 lei, used between the 1st of January and 31st of March, 1876. Because, concomitantly, the Ministry of Public Education, has offer some subsidies also to the old garden, Professor Anastasie Fătu, had as an obligation, to care out both of the botanic gardens, due to the fact that the job of Director, has been eliminated in the staff diagram of the University. The recurrent steps made by the Board of the Faculty, as well as by the Senate of the University toward the Ministry of Public Education, has led to allot, in 1884, of a small amount of money, still insufficient for the needs of the botanic garden. As emerges from the files kepted in the archives of the

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University, no sign of progress has been made till 1897. As a conclusion, that botanic garden could not face to the biological teaching process at that times.

After a proposal of the Prefecture of the Iași county, a field situated behind the present Palace of Culture, was allotted in order to set up a new botanic garden. Only in 27th of October, 1901, the Minister of Public Education, Spiru Haret, acquired from the Ministry of Agriculture, for the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, a waste land of 55,215 sq. m. On that fourth place, was going to establish a new botanic garden for the University. Professor Alexandru Popovici has been in charge to put “on the ground”, this new institution. A detailed plan of landscape gardening was elaborated in 1906 (this plan could be seen in a small museum in the present day Botanic Garden). At recurrent demands of the University and director of the botanic garden, in order to find financial resources for this newly planned botanic garden, the Ministry of Public Education gave always unfavourable answers. Thus, after 20 years of strains, due to the lack of funds, that landscape gardening plan was not put into practice ever. Nowadays, from that planned botanic garden, remind us only a name of a street nearby the swimming pool of the city, namely „*Strada Botanică*”.

Concomitantly with the efforts towards designing the garden from the Palace of Culture, the Professor Alexandru Popovici, asked from the Senate of the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” an approval to plant those species used in the laboratory, nearby the new building of the University. Thus, in 1921, Professor Alexandru Popovici, establish a new botanic garden, on a fifth place in Iași. He planted a lot of species on a field of ca 1 ha, nearby the University. Those plant species have been originated from the old botanic gardens, but also from other botanic gardens from Romania and abroad. That garden has lasted till 1959. Only in 1960, the surface of that garden was enlarged, reached at 2.5 ha, by inclusion of a land situated in the front of the University, as a section called „Decorative”. In 1937, after the retiring of Professor Alexandru Popovici, the management of the botanic garden has been achieved by: Professor Constantin Papp, Professor Constantin Burduja, and Professor Constantin Dobrescu. Among those 1,300 plant species planted there, nowadays are still surviving, for instance: *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Maclura pomifera*, *Halimodendron halodendron*, *Catalpa bignonioides*, *Fontanesia fortunei*, *Vitex agnus-castus* and so forth. In 1958, the Council of Iași town has brought in discussion “...set up a dendrological park and a botanic garden on a spoiled land in the neighborhood of Țicău district...”. At those discussions, Professor Elena Jeanrenaud, Professor Pierre Jeanrenaud, Professor Nicolae Macarovici, and Professor Constantin Burduja took part, also. In the 19th of January, 1960, in a meeting of Iași County Council, has been discussed a new systematized plan of the city. In that plan, a new Botanic Garden has been foresight, on a land situated in the area called “Podgoria Copou”. In September, 1960, has been approved so called “Projection Plan of the Botanic Garden of University in Iași”. A commission was named by the Ministry of Public Education, being made by: Professor Alexandru Buia (Craiova), Professor Ion Tarnavski (București), Professor Ștefan Csűrös (Cluj), and Professor Constantin Burduja (Iași). In March, 1961, the leaders of the University and City of Iași, established accurately the field for this new Botanic Garden, on Dumbrava Roșie street, No 7-9, with a surface of ca 70 ha.

Thus, in 1962, on a core of 8.85 ha, was established a sixth establishment of our Botanic Garden. In order to organise this new institution, Professor Emilian Țopa has been invited to become manager, from 20th of March, 1963. The detailed plan of landscape gardening has been elaborated by the architect Ștefan Păunel, in a close collaboration with other specialists, like: Maria Lazăr, Toader Chifu, Elena Marin, Corneliu Tăbăcaru, Valeriu Movileanu, and Ioan Ostaciuc. In 1967, the surface of the Botanic Garden has been of ca 30 ha, and in 1968 it has been of ca 65 ha. Simultaneously with the systematisation of the land,

inside the administrative building, have been organised: research laboratories, a herbarium, a library, and a small museum of the vegetal world.

In 1970, Professor Emilian Țopa has retired, and he was followed by Professor Constantin Toma, as manager. During his mandate, he made the first necessary steps in order to build up a greenhouse called „*Palmariu*”. In 1970, has been taken over other 6 ha of field from the Agronomic University in Iași, a land strong affected by landslide processes. On that land, there has been organised: an Relaxation Section and a Memorial Plants Section.

In October, 1973, Professor Mandache Leocov has been named as manager at our Botanic Garden. He take further the activity of his forerunners, but also he puts his own “fingers” over a lot of the achievements of the botanic garden in that period. He continued to organize from a scientific point of view all the sections of the Botanic Garden. Also, in that period, there has been organized the first three national symposiums of Botany in our institution. Under his management, the entire surface of our institution reached 99.8 ha, being now the largest one in Romania.

In 1990, Professor Mihai Mititiuc, has been named as manager of the Botanic Garden. Under his management, we continue to rise the number of the taxons, to repair and modernize the existing greenhouses, to build up other new greenhouses, to continue the maintainance works over all the plant collections, to organize flower exhibitions yearly, in Iași or in other towns, like the next ones: Piatra Neamț, Bârlad, Focșani, Galați and so on, to repair our central heating station, to set up the “Romanian Associations of the Botanic Gardens” (having the central office in București Botanic Garden), to collaborate at various educational activities together with a lot of schools in Iași city or in other places in Romania, and so on. From March, 2007, we have a new manager, Reader Cătălin Tănase.

Nowadays, the Botanic Garden belong to the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” in Iași. It is organized on 11 sections of activity, like the next: 1. Ornamental; 2. Greenhouses Complex; 3. Systematic; 4. Useful Plants; 5. Rosarium; 6. Dendrological; 7. Biological; 8. Romanian Flora and Vegetation; 9. World Flora; 10. Memorial Plants; 11. Relaxation. The entire thematic of the botanic garden has been elaborated having in mind the achievement of the next targets: teaching, scientific, conservation of a rich fund of native and exotic plant species, cultural-entertaining, and hygienic. Through its teaching activity, there is assured the education on environments and natural sciences of the pupils, students and the public at large. The scientific activity consist in the efforts of the specialists to adapt various exotic plant species to the climate of Iași city, to know the floristic diversity and vegetation of Romania, to preserve the natural habitats in Moldova, and so on. All the plant collection from our institution include ca 6,000 taxons, both native and exotical ones, in the greenhouses and outside. By its cultural-entertaining goal, our botanic garden organize yearly some floral exhibitions, like: “Autumn Flowers”, “Azaleas and Camelias Exhibition”, “Rose Exhibition”, and so on.

The hygienic function is assured by its protection against the northern winds, by protection of the phreatic waters in the basement and of the mineral waters, by stabilization of the slopes of “Podgoriilor Valley” etc. Those 99.8 ha of the Botanic Garden represent a real “green lung” for the city of Iași, by pumping off toward it a large amount of air, rich in oxygen.

A relatively new section of our institution was set aside for ornamental plants specially chosen to attract blind people or partially sighted people.

Through the extent of thematic, the goals of our institurion, as well as through the complexity of the landscape, we think that the Botanic Garden of Iași could be regard as a representatively one on a national level.