

The 80th Anniversary of the Biologist Rodica RUGINĂ



Rodica Rugină was born in Clipicești, Vrancea county, on 20th of January, 1940. The education provided by her parents, the teachers Vasile and Paraschiva Surugiu, set the basis of her continuous process of formation and training as future botanist. Her educational path started in his native village, where she attended primary school, and continued in Focșani, where she attended lower and upper secondary school.

She successfully completed her high school education in 1958 by getting the Baccalaureate diploma and then got admitted by exam to the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Faculty of Biology and Geography, Biology - Botany Department.

As a student, Rodica Surugiu proved the qualities necessary for a future researcher (seriousness, diligence, passion for the research work), especially by participating in the botany circle. She completed her university studies in 1963 with the BA degree.

Mrs. Rodica Rugină's professional career was closely linked to three representative institutions of Iași: the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, the “Al. I. Cuza” University and the Botanical Garden.

Thus, between 1963 and 1967, she worked as assistant at the Pharmaceutical Botany Department of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Iași, having obtained the job governmental decision. Probably it was there where she gained a special interest in medicinal plants, which she studied a lot in the following years. Later on she transferred to the Faculty of Biology and Geography of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, working as assistant at the Plant Morphology Department until 1968. During this period she also began doctoral studies (1971) with the thesis “Morphological and histo-anatomical research for regular weeds and those modified by herbicide treatment”, under the supervision of Professor Constantin Burduja. The thesis was defended publicly in 1980, so the passionate botanist became PhD in Biology.

Due to the reorganization of the Faculty of Biology, Rodica Rugină becomes a researcher within the Botanical Garden of the University, where she coordinated the activity of the Taxonomic Department, but in all her years of activity (1968-2002), Rodica Rugină continued to collaborate with the members of the morphology and plant anatomy team of the Faculty of Biology.

Throughout her professional career, Rodica Rugină carried out an intense didactic activity, conducting practical laboratory work (Pharmaceutical Botany, Morphology and Plant Anatomy) and field practice, supervising theses, dissertations and promotion scientific papers in highschool teaching.

The scientific activity, carried out mainly in collaboration with the members of the Plant Morphology Department, resulted in the publication of over 90 scientific articles, in

various research fields: comparative anatomy (systematic), ecological anatomy and experimental anatomy, with special attention to protected and medicinal plant species. Probably her most valuable work, that took her many years of intense study, is *Anatomy of medicinal plants. Atlas*, published in 1998, in joint authorship with Professor Constantin Toma, at the prestigious publishing house of the Romanian Academy. For this work, in 2000, Rodica Rugină was awarded the “Emanoil Teodorescu” Prize by the Romanian Academy.

Rodica Rugină has published, alone or by collaboration, other books of botanical interest: *Can the mysteries of life be solved?* (V. Rugină and R. Rugină, 1993), *Protected plants in Romania* (R. Rugină and M. Mititiuc, 2003), *Volatile oils and aromatherapy* (R. Rugină and I. Boz, 2013), *The adventure of plants on the globe* (R. Rugină, 2017). In the same way she contributed to the publication of manuals of practical works of Morphology and anatomy of plants, as well as to the work *Illustrated flora of vascular plants in Eastern Romania* (Sârbu I., Ștefan N., Ivănescu L., Mânzu C., vol. 1, 2001).

Most part of the 35 years of professional activity of the researcher Rodica Rugină consisted in the coordination of the Taxonomic Section of the Botanical Garden of Iași, a defining element among all the sections of the institution; hence the great responsibility in conserving and enriching the collections of characteristic plants. In order to face the inherent difficulties, she passionately and professionally involved in all activities specific to “ex situ” conservation: collecting plant material directly from spontaneous habitats, obtaining specimens from species as diverse as possible through appropriate horticultural techniques, from similar units in country and abroad, determination and redetermination of species in collections, collection of plants for “Flora Exsiccata of Moldova and Dobrogea”. She paid special attention to the rare plants collected from different parts of the country and made efforts to adapt and even naturalize them. Field work was also accompanied by laboratory work, most cultivated species being studied under a research contract conducted over a period of 5 years (*Studies of conservation of the genofond of rare and protected plants in Romania, their introduction and acclimatization in the Botanical Garden of Iași*).

All throughout her activity at the Botanical Garden she collaborated with the successive directors of the institution (Emilian Țopa, Constantin Toma, Mandache Leocov and Mihai Mititiuc), in order to permanently enrich the diversity of species in the section she coordinated. She also strived herself to increase the interest of visitors by creating an open-air amphitheater, a small pond for aquatic plants and some fountains. To all this we must add her involvement in guiding both regular visitors and students from different academic fields (Biology, Pharmacy, Agronomy, Geography, etc.).

The decades dedicated to the cultivation and study of plants, which she deeply loves, were marked by the passion, seriousness, tenacity and critical spirit with which she approached each and every activity. For our younger colleagues she remains a model of professionalism.

Her 80th anniversary is that special moment in which colleagues and all those who appreciate her activity can express their gratitude wishing her many happy returns of the day, good health and good spirits!

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