

*IN MEMORIAM*

**Academician Constantin Toma – a life dedicated to plant knowledge**



This year, on November 19, have passed ninety years since the birth of Academician Constantin Toma – the person who, for more than six decades, contributed essentially to the knowledge of the plant world and to the training of generations of researchers or teachers, who appreciated him for the unique way in which he was always ready to offer new perspectives in discovering the secrets of the natural sciences.

Academician Constantin Toma dedicated his entire life to the science of plants, and is considered the most brilliant plant morphologist and anatomist, who founded in Iași, the most famous *School of Plant Anatomy and Morphology* in Romania, where he developed, together with his disciples, relevant research in the field of plant biology and electron microscopy, with results recognized by specialists from the country and abroad.

These researches are notable through the diversity of the addressed topics, which targeted original studies on 800 species of native or cultivated plants and 50 varieties, grouped into 90 botanic families of pteridophytes, gymnosperms and angiosperms. Particular attention was paid to certain taxa presenting food, medicinal, melliferous or fodder importance.

The microscopic and ultramicroscopic researches were primarily focused on aspects of plant cytology, embryology, histochemistry, cytogenetics, plant cell and tissue cultures, taxonomical and ecological anatomy, carpology and plant sexuality biology, xylotomy and phytochemistry.

The group of researchers formed by Academician Constantin Toma unites specialists from the Faculty of Biology and the “Anastasie Fătu” Botanical Garden within “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, from the Institute of Biological Research in Iași, from “Stejarul” Biological Research Center in Piatra-Neamț, and from “Ion Borcea” Natural Sciences Museum Complex in Bacău.

The scientific opera of Academician Constantin Toma includes 21 scientific treatises, monographs or atlases published by prestigious publishing houses, 14 courses and manuals of practical works for students, 12 studies in volumes with scientific reviewers, and 480 scientific articles published in various journals in the country or abroad; most of those articles were published with his doctoral students and collaborators.

Professor Constantin Toma paid special attention to aspects related to the history of biology and to the evocation of the scientific contributions of his teachers and of many national

and international personalities in the field of biology. In this respect, he was a model in terms of the way he honored the memory, or expressed gratitude to all those who contributed essentially to his development. He also published, as unique author or in collaboration, 120 articles presenting aspects from the history of biology, and 100 articles popularizing the natural sciences.

Academician Constantin Toma express a lot of emotion in the articles evoking his native village Gugești in Vaslui County, also in the memories from his years of study about the remarkable teachers from the “Cuza Vodă” High School in Huși, or in the memories about the conferences organized with former colleagues and students at the “Mihai Ralea” Municipal Library in the same locality.

I often had the opportunity to find out, in direct discussions, how he managed difficult events in the history of the University, of the Faculty of Biology and of the Botanical Garden.

Our *Professor* contributed to the development of the Botanical Garden on the site situated in Copou Hill. As director, between 1970 and 1973, he initiated new approaches in botanical research, while from an administrative perspective he contributed to the completion of the scientific sections and planted the horse chestnut trees at the main entrance. He was very attached by those trees, and he repeatedly told me that they should never be removed, even though in recent decades, almost all the specimens have been affected by the mining moth (*Cameraria ohridella*). He also said that those specimens remind him of the most beautiful years of his life, and the pest control should be applied to the entire city, not just on that alley in the Botanical Garden.

Academician Constantin Toma passed away on September 8, 2020, and is buried in the cemetery of Podgoria Copou Monastery located near the Botanical Garden, a historical monument founded by Prince Vasile Lupu in 1638.

His disciples remember him as the founder of a renowned School, for the clarity of his academic courses, for his model as a dedicated researcher, and especially for the nobility of his soul !

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