

Presentation

This volume is a collection of botanical articles published in honor of Professor Francesco Maria Raimondo to celebrate his 70th birthday and his activity in the field of botany. It contains the contributions of Italian and foreign colleagues on flora and vegetation of the Mediterranean presented at the international conference “Evolution and adaptation of species and plant communities in the Mediterranean environment”, which took place the 26th February 2015 in Florence at the seat of the Italian Botanical Society. The conference was organized by friends, colleagues and students of Prof. Raimondo under the auspices of the Italian Botanical Society and the OPTIMA (Organization for the Phyto Taxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area).

The scientific activity of Prof. Raimondo, who had the good fortune to work in a city like Palermo, situated in the centre of the Mediterranean basin and with an ancient and magnificent botanical garden dedicated to the Mediterranean and tropical plants, was inspired and had as reference the Mediterranean basin.

One of his major scientific interests is the flora, which was investigated by him from the points of view of systematics, chorology, phytogeography and ecology; in particular, he has discovered and described new Mediterranean species, among them one of the first was *Rhamnus lojaconoi*, a little tree confined on the Madonie mountains, followed by several other species of *Brassica*, *Centaurea*, *Hieracium*, *Limonium*, *Pyrus*, etc., including *Ptilostemon greuteri*, a large shrub of *Compositae* that grows on Mt. Inici in a narrow area of the relief along the Tyrrhenian coast. Other research carried out by Prof. Raimondo are related to the biodiversity of Sicily, the vegetation of the Madonie and Nebrodi, with particular regard to wetlands, cartography, geobotany, ornamental flora of parks and gardens, etc..

As a natural corollary of his research, by initiative of Prof. Raimondo the *Herbarium Mediterraneum* was founded in Palermo and three new botanical magazines were launched: “Flora Mediterranea”, “Boccone” and “Quaderni di Botanica ambientale e applicata”; the first two, being strongly characterized for research in Systematic Botany and Floristics of the Mediterranean Area, were immediately imposed on the international level, the third is targeted mainly to the spreading of the work carried out by the Laboratory of Systematic, Phytogeography and Plant Ecology of Palermo. The “motto” of the Quaderni was taken from the Gymnasium in the Botanical Garden of Palermo, where stands, in the central part of the dome, around the depiction of the goddess Flora: *miscuit utile dulci* (Mixed what is helpful with what is sweet).

Here, then, this “Festschrift”, this volume containing scientific contributions that mainly relate to the themes preferred by Prof. Raimondo, and which is intended to

honor him for his scientific and academic dynamism during a long period of years and in which he is still in full activity.

Alongside the scientific research, Prof. Raimondo has always been very involved in various ways also in the promotion of botanical culture in a broad sense, that is oriented to the conservation of flora, botanical gardens, history of Botany, monumental trees, citrus fruits of Sicily, ornamental plants and gardens of Palermo. His interventions (book presentations, reprints of classic works, catalogs of exhibitions, symposia and conferences, and various editions of laudationes at awards and honorary degrees) were joined in the book “*Contributi alla promozione della cultura botanica*” [Contributions to the promotion of botanical culture] (Trento, TEMI, 2015, edited by Franco Pedrotti), presented in occasion of the conference in Florence.

Finally, we cannot forget the public commitments of Prof. Raimondo, as Director of the Department of Botany, the Botanical Garden and *Herbarium Mediterraneum* as well as Dean of the Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences of the University of Palermo and - finally – Town councillor of green, parks, historic gardens and animal Rights of the City of Palermo, without forgetting his mandates as President of the Italian Botanical Society and of the OPTIMA; in the latter capacity, he organized memorable botanical congresses in the botanical gardens of Palermo. The last of the series is the congress of 30th October 2015 on “*Giardini e paesaggio. La tenerezza filosofica dei giardini*” [Gardens and landscape. The philosophical tenderness of gardens], for the 100th anniversary of the birth of Prof. Rosario Assunto (1915-1994), which he has organized coinciding with the official end of his academic activity.

Friends, students and colleagues of Professor Francesco Maria Raimondo are particularly pleased to dedicate this volume of *Flora Mediterranea* in a sign of respect, friendship and admiration, with the hope that he will continue to cultivate the *Scientia amabilis* in the Botanic Garden of Palermo with profit and advantage to Science and to all of us.

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