

Benito Valdés

Santiago Castroviejo Bolibar (1946-2009)



Fig. 1. Santiago Castroviejo in field.

Santiago Castroviejo Bolívar was born on 27 August, 1946 in Tirán (Moaña, province of Pontevedra, NW Spain) and died at Madrid on 30 September 2009. He completed in Galicia his primary and secondary studies and then he moved to Madrid where he was educated at the “Universidad Complutense”, which together with the University of Barcelona were at that time the only two places where to get the Degree in Biology. Santiago graduated in Biological Sciences in 1969 and three years later he got his PhD Title at the University of Madrid.

From 1969 to 1973 he was appointed Associated Lecturer of the Faculty of Sciences, University of Madrid. But on January 1974 he got the post of Scientific Collaborator of the Spanish Council of Scientific Research (C.S.I.C.) and he moved to the “Real Jardín Botánico de Madrid” where he dedicated his activity to botanical research in a deep vocational

way. In 1980 he was appointed Research Scientist of the C.S.I.C. and in 1990 Research Professor of the C.S.I.C., the highest possible scientific position in the Spanish Council.

Santiago was an excellent field botanist. He took part in many botanical excursions to different areas of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic and Canary Islands. He also organized several expeditions to diverse Mediterranean countries, including Italy and Morocco, with the aim to increase the representation of extra Iberian Peninsula material in the Herbarium of Madrid Botanical Garden, and organized “identification seminars” after each expedition, to correct and complete the names given in the field to the plants collected before including them into the herbarium. He also organized or participated in botanical

expeditions in Central and South America, when he established solid links of cooperation with research centres of several countries, particularly Panama, Colombia and Venezuela.

At the “Jardín Botánico” Santiago not only developed an intense activity on botanical research, but he was also worried for the management of the Garden and he involved in administration tasks which greatly contributed to improve the situation of both the research center and the garden itself. He was Secretary of the “Real Jardín Botánico” from 1979 to 1980, and Director from 1984 to 1994. During these ten years Santiago re-organized the scientific structure of the Garden, re-organized and improved the herbarium and completed the already important library, purchasing books and periodicals to complete the existing collections, and established solid links with many European and American botanical institutions, to convert the Royal Botanic Garden of Madrid in a prestigious center.

He was Director of the “*Anales del Jardín Botánico de Madrid*” from 1984 to 1994, Director of the series of monographs “*Ruizia*” from 1985, and member of the Advisory Boards of *Studia Botanica Salmanticensis* (from 1983), *Nordic Journal of Botany* (from 1996) and *Kurtziana* (from 1988).

He had been member of the “Flora and Monographs” Commission of OPTIMA from 1976 to 1996, and he was member of the Steering Committee of the Species Plantarum Project Flora of the World from 1995, member of the Executive Committee of Euro+Med PlantBase from 2000, member of the Board of *Flora Neotropica* from 2003 and member of the Advisory Committee of *Flora del Ecuador* from 2003. Besides that, he was member of the “Real Academia de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Naturales” from 2002, and had been Vicepresident (2000-2001) and President (2002-2003) of the Spanish Royal Society of Natural History.

As a botanist, he developed an intense research activity mainly in the fields of Floristics, Plant Vegetation and Taxonomy, both in Spain and C and S America. He was responsible for five research projects in C and S America with a great incidence in plant protection, two in Venezuela, two in Panama and one in Colombia, between 1975 and 1999, and for two important Spanish floristic projects: “Anthos”, a chorological inventory of the Spanish flora, and “Flora Iberica”. His intense scientific dedication resulted in almost 200 publications, including papers, books and chapters of books. On 13 November 2009, one month after his death, he was awarded the National Research Prize “Alejandro Malaspina” by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology, as a recognition of his scientific career.

Santiago Castroviejo was quite aware of how needed a flora of Spain was to finally substitute the only existing flora of the country published between 1861 and 1880 by M. Willkomm and J. Lange (*Prodromus Florae Hispanicae*), which could improve for Spain the more recent and quite useful *Flora Europaea* (T. G. Tutin & al. (eds.), 1964-1980, 1993). In 1980 Santiago managed to get financing for two years to prepare a floristic project initially called “Flora Española”, which was promoted by two groups of botanists, one in the “Real Jardín Botánico de Madrid” and another in the “Instituto Pirenaico de Ecología”, C.S.I.C., Jaca. This project was proposed to the Spanish Ministry of Education as “Flora Iberica”, to cover the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. This proposal was accepted and financed by the Ministry, with an important contribution from the C.S.I.C., from 1981 on. Santiago was the real leader of the project. He managed to get the collaboration of over one hundred fifty taxonomists, two thirds of them from Spain, he arranged the loan of herbarium material from most botanical institutions of Spain and

Portugal and some key foreign herbaria (particularly Genève), and organized a network of advisers to correct and improve the manuscripts. Fourteen volumes of *Flora Iberica* have been published so far (1-8, 14, 13-15, 18 and 21) and two (12 and 17) are ready for publication. Santiago has been the editor or co-editor for all published volumes, as well as for vol. 12, which was ready for publication before his death.

When two years ago he knew that he was seriously ill, his main worry was to have *Flora Iberica* finished and on spite of his each time more delicate health, he continued working for the project with great intensity and dedication. He stayed working on *Flora Iberica* until two days before his death, *Flora Iberica* being, without doubts, the most important contribution of Santiago Castroviejo to the scientific knowledge of the floristic diversity of W Mediterranean. It is the time now for his colleagues to pay their debt to Santiago by finishing off *Flora Iberica* in the shortest possible time and with the same level of accuracy imposed by him.

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