

The 2024 anniversaries of the Botanical Garden, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Science

Several anniversaries of the Botanical Garden of University of Zagreb Faculty of Science and its former employees were celebrated in 2024. The Garden's 135th birthday coincided with the birthday jubilees of two retired Garden managers: the 90th of Assistant Professor Ljerka Regula, and the 70th of Biserka Juretić, MSc. Moreover, the founding fathers of the Garden, University Professor Antun Heinz and Head Gardener Vítězslav Durchánek, died 105 and 100 years ago, respectively. A combined celebration and commemoration were organized in October of 2024 with the unveiling the monument dedicated to Professor Heinz.

135 years of Zagreb University Botanical Garden

Zagreb University Botanical Garden was founded in 1889 on the same 4.5 hectares which occupies today. Back then intended for the approximately 47,000 citizens of a provincial town of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the Garden is nowadays situated in the very heart of the Croatian

capital and is visited by more than 100,000 guests per year. For its educational, cultural and touristic values, as well as its overall Croatian historic significance, the Botanical Garden was statutorily protected in 1971 as a National Monument of Culture and Park architecture.

Originally, the Garden operated as a component of the Department of Botany and Physiology of the Faculty of Philosophy. From 1946, after the Faculty of Science was established, all natural disciplines were transferred to it, and the Division of Botany with the Botanical Garden was formed among others in the Department of Biology. The Garden was separated from the Division in 2013, becoming an independent subunit of the Department of Biology.

Most of the Botanical Garden area consists of the arboretum, designed in the informal English landscape style. A smaller part was designed in classic French style with a central *parterre*, above which an exhibition glasshouse was erected in 1892 (Fig. 1). Designed and produced in Vienna, it is unique in Croatia. Never thoroughly reconstructed, deteriorating slowly, the glasshouse has been inaccessible to



Fig. 1. The central *parterre* of the Botanical Garden around 1925, with newly appointed Head Gardener Franjo Kušenić. The exhibition glasshouse above the *parterre* was already closed to the public. (photo: Franjo Kušenić, from the Garden Archives).

the public since the First World War; today it is empty. Numerous attempts were made for a full restoration of this only public greenhouse in Zagreb and Croatia – so far, unsuccessfully.

The first inventory of the Garden plants, compiled by its founder Professor Antun Heinz and published in 1895/6, numbered ca 1500 species: today we grow about 7500, divided into collections that are being systematically revised. Since its foundation, the Botanical Garden has maintained its role in university teaching, scientific research and professional work in the field of botany, as well as educating the general public via the popularization of nature and plant life protection. It is the only Croatian certified member of the Botanic Garden Conservation International (BGCI), as well as a leading national botanical garden and representative in the European Botanic Gardens Consortium (EBGC).

105th anniversary of the death of Professor Antun Heinz (1861 – 1919)

Founder of the Royal Botanical Garden, as it was called at its birth in 1889 during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was Professor of botany and bacteriology Dr Antun Heinz. In his career he held such posts as Head of the Department of Botany and Physiology, and Rector of the University of Zagreb. Although a well-known intellectual, Professor Heinz was constrained to retire in 1913, due to his anti-monarchical and anti-Yugoslavian but pro-Croatian views, in the historically extremely difficult times before the First World War. Though Professor Heinz had (a very short) street in Zagreb named after him, and we named a pergola-passage promenade along the Botanical Garden in his honour, it has been our long-lasting wish to erect a monument to his memory. Finally, it came true in October of 2024,



Fig. 2. Bust of Professor Antun Heinz, with its young author Ira Orešković, erected at the Alpinum rockery. (photo: Vanja Stamenković).



Fig. 3. Festive gathering in celebration of 135 years of the Garden, with the unveiling of the bust of Professor Heinz. In the front row, the guests of honour (left-right): Biserka Juretić MSc, retired Garden manager; Professor Mirko Planinić, Dean of the Faculty of Science; Dr Ljerka Regula-Bevilacqua, retired Garden manager; Ms Roberta Gazibarić, Professor Heinz's great-granddaughter. (photo: Mirna Kirin).

commemorating the 105th year since his death and the 135 years of the Garden he established. The bust representing Professor Heinz in his prime, for he was only 28 years old when he founded the Garden, was selected in a school competition from a dozen models made by pupils at the *School of Applied Arts and Design* in Zagreb. Young sculptors had a difficult task to create a likeness of Professor Heinz in the form of a bust, based on his only known photographic portrait. From three best models, the first prize was given to the work of Ira Orešković, a 3rd year school student, and that model was used for casting a bronze bust (Fig. 2).

The bust on a stone plinth was erected at the historic main entrance to the Botanical Garden, at the edge of the Alpinum (Fig. 3) – the oldest Garden rockery, designed by Professor Heinz.

It was unveiled by two retired Garden managers, and two members of the Heinz family, in a festive ceremony attended by the representatives of the Faculty, the School, the City Council, the Ministry of Culture and Media, as well as many students (Fig. 4).

100th anniversary of the death of Vítězslav Durchánek (1857 – 1924)

All the historical records make much of Czech gardener, teacher and garden architect Vítězslav Durchánek as co-founder of the Botanical Garden, alongside Professor Heinz. Educated in Czechia and Germany, additionally trained in Belgium and France, Durchánek moved to Croatia in 1890. Drawing on the concepts of Professor Heinz and his own practical skills, Durchánek drew the plans and



Fig. 4. Dean of the Faculty of Science, Professor Mirko Planinić, addressing the guests. Also shown is the 1905 photo of Professor Antun Heinz wearing his rectoral chain, upon which the young sculptors based their models, one of which is seen on the left. Original Garden Plans by Heinz and Dürchánek are displayed for the guests. A photo of Vítězslav Dürchánek is to be seen upon the wall. (photo: Mirna Kirin).

supervised the construction of the Garden, of which he was appointed Head Gardener until his retirement in 1923.

It is interesting to note, in the light of the Garden's anniversaries and its continuous maintenance, that the role of Head Gardener after Dürchánek, exactly one hundred years ago, was taken over by his apprentice and 'right hand' Franjo Kušenić (Fig. 1). Of Kušenić's life very little is known: he was a keen photographer, born in the year of the Garden's establishment (1889), retired after the Second World War, and died 70 years ago (in 1954).

That year, again, coincides with the birth of another long-time Garden employee: retired manager MSc Biserka Juretić.

70th birthday of Biserka Juretić

Biserka Juretić MSc has spent all her professional life in the Garden. She was born on December 7, 1954, in Oranovica, but moved to Split soon after, where she graduated from the Classical Gymnasium. She graduated in 1980 from the Biology Department of the Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, and got her master's degree at the same Faculty in 1987. She was employed in the Botanical Garden first as a senior technician (1979) in charge of seed collecting and exchanging via *Index Seminum* publications, then a (senior) collection curator (1980) supervising the collections of swamp, insectivorous, medicinal and tropical plants, as well as ornamental flowerbeds. In 1995 Ms Juretić became Garden manager, which she remained for almost 25 years. She

supervised all administrative issues, overseeing the fundraising and spending, planning and implementing of investments, renovation and revitalization projects in the Garden, etc. She was also engaged in professional and popularization work, co-authored books and guides, as well as professional and popular articles, conference announcements, educational exhibitions and workshops. She participated in many radio and television educational programmes, gave public lectures, etc. Since 2007, Ms Juretić has been a representative of the Croatian botanical gardens in the European Botanic Gardens Consortium (EBGC), and a regular member of the organizing committee of the European Botanic Gardens Congresses. Together with her colleagues, Ms Juretić encouraged the association of Croatian botanical gardens and arboreta in the Section of Botanical and School Gardens, Arboreta and Botanical Collections, which operates as a part of the Croatian Botanical Society.

In 2009, Biserka Juretić received the University of Zagreb Award for her dedicated work on the restoration of the Botanical Garden and its promotion in the City of Zagreb and in the academic community.

90th birthday of Assistant Professor Ljerka Regula-Bevilacqua

After her retirement in 1999, Dr Regula had her career path depicted in *Acta Botanica Croatica* (64(2), 401–406, 2005) in honour of her 70th birthday. During the succeeding 20 years Dr Regula has never ceased to work and write: she published 10 scientific and professional papers, 15 biographical articles, 16 articles on protected plant species of the Republic of Croatia and ca 50 articles of other contents. She participated in symposiums, photo-exhibitions, TV and radio programmes, and also gave many public lectures. In 2004 she was invited by the Department of Biology of J.J. Strossmayer University in Osijek, to organize horticulture classes, which she taught in the summer semesters of 2004/5 and 2006/7. Since 2005 she has been a regular member of the Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of *Matrix Croatica* (Matica Hrvatska). In 2008 she was elected an honorary member of the Croatian *Camellia* Society, and in 2011 the Head of the Section for the Protection of Biological Diversity, Scientific Council for Nature Protection of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In the period between 2004 and 2024, Dr Regula was co-founder and specialist expert of the Croatian *Iris* Garden and Mt Strahinjščica Wild Flora Garden.

The lifetime-achievement acknowledgement came in 2009, when Dr Regula received the 'Ivo Horvat Award' from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, for outstanding accomplishments in the field of nature protection.

Dr Regula still visits the Botanical Garden quite often. She always announces her arrival, giving the staff time to prepare any questions about a plant, book or photograph in the archives or database, to which there is always a swift an-

swer of what it is, where to look for it, or how it is to be found. The rich flower garden around Dr Regula's private cottage is still perfectly maintained: she divides her iris collection yearly, regularly bringing every duplicate to the Garden, along with many books, memorabilia and perfectly categorized photos. And she still drives her car.

While wishing Dr Regula much joy for her 90th birthday, and many happy years to come, we would also wish the same for all of us: to have her wit, her spirit and her good

will as long as she has! Perhaps with a "slightly better back and knees", as that is the only thing that she ever complains about, still "dreaming all night of botanizing across Croatian mountains and islands" ...

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