



Newsletter N° 43 (1-2)

December 2016

OPTIMA *Newsletter*

OPTIMA Newsletter is a news journal for the presentation and discussion of issues pertinent to Mediterranean botany, published by the Secretariat of the Organization for the Phyto-Taxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area.

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ISSN: 0376-5016 printed; 2225-6970 online 43: 1-16, (1)-(20), (2016), OPTIMA Newslett.
DOI: 10.7320/OptNewslett43.0.1

The *OPTIMA Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the support of:*



Orto Botanico ed Erbario Mediterraneo
Università degli Studi di Palermo

OPTIMA *Newsletter*

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BARTER SPECIMENS FOR OPTIMA MEMBERSHIP AND BOCCONEA

Through an agreement between OPTIMA and the Herbarium Greuter Foundation, you may pay OPTIMA membership fees, or purchase volumes of *Bocconea*, by sending herbarium specimens to the Herbarium Greuter in Palermo. The following conditions apply:

1. Only specimens from the following areas are acceptable: peri-Mediterranean countries (except Italy and France), plus Portugal and Bulgaria, the Atlantic Islands (Macaronesia), and the domain of Boissier's "Flora Orientalis" (Middle East, Transcaucasia, Crimea). Material from the country of residence (if part of this area) should be given preference.
2. The herbarium specimens must be unmounted, in good condition, identified, and contain complete information on readable, durable labels. The Herbarium Mediterraneum reserves the right to return specimens judged to be of insufficient quality.
3. Each herbarium specimen will be worth 1 € Each delivery will consist of a minimum of 30 herbarium sheets.
4. Each mailing will include the sender's name, the number of herbarium specimens sent, the credit earned and the purpose it is to be used for.
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F. M. Raimondo & W. Greuter (eds.) *Flora Mediterranea* and *Bocconea* are published by the *Herbarium Mediterraneum Panormitanum* under the auspices of OPTIMA. These publications cover articles dealing with plant geography, floristics and systematic botany in its widest sense, relating to Mediterranean plants of all groups, whether living or fossil. A special emphasis is placed on articles that exceed national limits in coverage or by their general interest. *Flora Mediterranea* is a journal published annually with a variety of articles whereas *Bocconea* is devoted to monographic subjects:

- Vol. 1: Results of the First "Iter Mediterraneum" in south-eastern Spain, June-July 1988.
- Vol. 2: A check-list of Sicilian fungi.
- Vol. 3: Results of the Second "Iter Mediterraneum" in Israel, March-April 1989.
- Vol. 4: Current research on the biology of threatened plant species of the Mediterranean Basin and Macaronesia: a database.
- Vol. 5: Proceedings of the VII OPTIMA Meeting in Borovetz, 18-30 July 1992, (I and II).
- Vol. 6: Contributions towards a checklist of Mediterranean Lichens (out of print).
- Vol. 7: Proceedings of the Workshops on "Conservation of the Wild Relatives of European Cultivated Plants".
- Vol. 8: Catalogue des plantes vasculaires rares, menacées ou endémiques du Maroc.

- Vol. 9: The systematics of *Anthemis* L. (Compositae, Anthemideae) in W and C North Africa.
- Vol. 10: An annotated checklist of the flora of the Abruzzo.
- Vol. 11: Results of the Fourth "Iter Mediterraneum" in Cyprus, April 1991.
- Vol. 12: Catalogue of the benthic marine macroalgae of the Italian coast of the Adriatic Sea.
- Vol. 13: Proceedings of the IX OPTIMA Meeting. Paris, 11-17 May 1998.
- Vol. 14: Checklist of the Lichens and lichenicolous Fungi of the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands.
- Vol. 15: The official Flora of Sannio (Benevento, SE - Italy).
- Vol. 16: Proceedings of the X OPTIMA Meeting. Palermo, 13-19 September 2001, (I & II).
- Vol. 17: Results of the Third "Iter Mediterraneum" in Sicily, May-June 1990.
- Vol. 18: Identification key and description of Mediterranean maquis litter microfungi.
- Vol. 19: Proceedings of the VI Conference on Plant Taxonomy in Alghero, 31 May - 2 June 2003.
- Vol. 20: A catalogue of plants growing in Sicily.
- Vol. 21: Proceedings of the XI OPTIMA meeting in Beograd, 5-11 September 2004.
- Vol. 22: Check-list of the Hornworts, Liverworts and Mosses of Italy.
- Vol. 23: Proceedings of the XII OPTIMA Meeting Pisa, 10-16 September 2007.
- Vol. 24: Proceedings of the XIII OPTIMA Meeting Antalya, 22-26 March 2010.
- Vol. 25: Results of Seventh "Iter Mediterraneum" in Peloponnese, Greece, May to June 1995.
- Vol. 26: Results of fifth "Iter Mediterraneum" in Morocco, 8-27 June 1997.
- Vol. 27: Results of 12th "Iter Mediterraneum" in Tunisia, 24 March - 4 April 2014. / The Libyan Collections in FI (Herbarium Centrale Italicum and Webb Herbarium) and Studies on the Libyan Flora by R. Pampanini, Part

(*Flora Mediterranea* and *Bocconea* are available for OPTIMA members with 70% and 30% of discount respectively)

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Publication on Lichens: Nimis & Poelt 1987: The lichens and lichenicolous fungi of Sardinia.

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Ordinary members receive announcements, circulars and the OPTIMA Newsletter via e-mail (or the latter in print, against extra charge), a free subscription to *Flora Mediterranea*, benefit from reduced rates on page charges for papers in *Flora Mediterranea*, on for selected publications and on registration for OPTIMA Meetings, and have all the rights and benefits of being a full member.

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Institutional members, in addition to the Ordinary members, also receive a free subscription to *Bocconea*.

Associate members receive the newsletters and the circulars, but are not entitled to any other benefits.

Associate membership will become effective immediately upon receipt of the signed application form. Ordinary, Online Only or Institutional membership will become effective upon receipt of the signed application form and payment of the membership fee for the current year.

Current membership rates:

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Thanks to an agreement signed with the Società Botanica Italiana, it has become possible to pay the Membership dues for both associations – SBI and OPTIMA – with a single money transfer, and at the same time to benefit by a discount.

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Please send this order form to: OPTIMA Secretariat - Dr G. Domina, via Lincoln, 2. I-90133 Palermo, Italy.

O P T I M A N E W S

by Gianniantonio Domina

OPTIMA Newsletter n° 43 continues the standard followed in the previous issues. The Newsletter is divided into two parts, the first with the News and the second with the Notices of Publications. The first section regarding news has become gradually thinner due to the fast and cheap channel represented by e-mail. The news here reported are only those that it makes sense to also produce as hard copy.

Short news from OPTIMA Commissions are included, limited to those that reported activity in 2015 and 2016 up to now.

SECRETARIAT

2015-2016. The Secretariat kept OPTIMA's and the accounts of the Publications, Itinera Mediterranea and Prize Commissions. It also administered the membership files and managed the distribution and sale of OPTIMA's publications. It worked as a liaising centre for the Council and Board members and the working groups and commissions of our Organization. The Website News section, and regular e-mailing, were the most used ways to communicate with OPTIMA members.

DEATHS

Prof. Jean M. Géhu (Bailleul, France), died 15 February 2014.

Prof. Hans Runemark (Lund, Sweden), died 11 December 2014.

Prof. Loutfy Boulos (Cairo, Egypt), died 27 April 2015.

Prof. Pierre Quézel (Bouches-du-Rhône, France) died 21 October 2015.

Dr Franz Speta (Linz, Austria), died 5 December 2015.

Prof. Avinoam Danin (Jerusalem, Israel), died 12 December 2015.

UPDATES ON COMMISSIONS

During the last OPTIMA Meeting, held in Montpellier, the 6-11 June 2016, the new *Commission for Mediterranean ethnobotany* was created and the *Web Commission* was resurrected. This in order to better adapt the coordination activities to the new research trends. The International Board and the Execu-

tive Council, during the joint session of 6 June 2016, decided that OPTIMA would have a new website more user friendly with different languages.

HERBARIUM AND LIBRARY COMMISSION COMMISSION

The Commission has as its main goal the furthering of the OPTIMA Herbarium and Library in Palermo. This designation was conferred by the International Board of OPTIMA to the Herbarium Mediterraneum Panormitanum in Palermo, in recognition of the furthering of OPTIMA through that institution and in order to encourage its further growth and expansion into a main, centrally situated institution for the investigation of the Mediterranean flora. Its principal purpose is to encourage Mediterranean botanists

- to send their botanical publications to the OPTIMA Library;
- to donate sets of their plant collections to the OPTIMA Herbarium in Palermo; and
- to make full use of the Palermo collections for their own research purposes.

The Palermo collections consist of two separately administered but closely interlinked parts: the Herbarium Mediterraneum (PAL) of Palermo University, founded 1795, which includes the historically important Herbarium Siculum and also the books and journals received in exchange for OPTIMA's own journals, *Flora Mediterranea* and *Bocconeia*; and the Herbarium Greuter (PAL-Gr), with its associated Library, donated in December 2008 to the Università degli Studi di Palermo by OPTIMA's co-founder and past president, Werner Greuter.

In a time when university-based research collections suffer great hardship due to the financial constraints under which universities in general, and Italian universities in particular, must operate, it is comforting to know that both parts of the OPTIMA Herbarium

and Library benefit of support that is independent from and additional to university funding. The International Foundation “Pro Herbario Mediterraneo”, founded and administered by OPTIMA President Francesco Maria Raimondo, and the Foundation Herbarium Greuter, run personally by its patron, ensure the continued, sustainable functioning of the botanical collections in Palermo.

Triennial report (2013-2015)

The Commission’s activity report for the triennial 2013-2015 focuses on the Greuter collections, which are of central interest for OPTIMA’s purposes.

The Greuter Herbarium

At the beginning of 2013, the holdings of the Greuter herbarium consisted of a general collection (55,000 specimens), the herbarium of Father Pierre Gave, acquired ca. 1970 (ca. 30,000 specimens, mainly SW-European), that of Dr. Antoine Bras, acquired in 2008 (ca. 30,000 specimens, mainly S France), and the main duplicate set of the Herbarium Phitos & Kamari, received in 2011 (6,800 specimens from Greece). The total number of mounted and inventoried specimens was about 64,000, the estimated total, of > 120,000.

In 2013 an important donation was received through the good offices of Prof. Dimitrios Phitos: The heirs of the well-known Greek botanist Leonidas Pinatzi offered to PAL-Gr his important, mainly Greek plant collections of ca. 25,000 specimens, not counting duplicates. Other accessions, through purchase, gifts, exchange and own collecting activity, totalled ca. 10,000 specimens during the last triennium, so that the estimated total holdings now approach 160,000 specimens, of which over 90,000 are now mounted and inventoried. Over the triennium, the respective rates of increase are 30 % and 40 %, respectively.

The holdings of PAL-Gr are primarily C and S European, with emphasis on Greece, but there are also sizeable amounts of material from overseas, both from Mediterranean-climate (Australia, S Africa) and other areas (Caribbean). From an OPTIMA point of view, the presence of sets from several Itinera Mediterranea may be noted: Iter I to SE Spain, Iter III in Sicily, Iter V to Morocco, Iter VII through the Peloponnese, and most recently Iter XII to Tunisia. For some of them, PAL-Gr took charge of the identification, labelling, and distributing the material. Also, high-resolution digital images of selected portions have been taken, and more are being added, that can be viewed at:

http://147.163.105.223/herbarium_vsimple_en.asp

A series of “Occasional Papers from the Herbarium Greuter” is being published at irregular intervals, in conjunction with other journals. The following have been published to date:

- N° 1 (2012): Results of the seventh “Iter Mediterraneum” in the Peloponnese, Greece, May to June 1995 (by W. Greuter). – *Bocconea* 25 [127 pp.].
- N° 2 (2015): Roxburgh’s *Cynoglossum marifolium* (Boraginaceae) – reassessment and typification of a long forgotten name (by W. Greuter). – *Fl. Medit.* 25 (Special Issue): 157–166.
- N° 3 (2015): Results of the 12th “Iter Mediterraneum” in Tunisia, 24 March – 4 April, 2014 (G. Domina, R. El Mokhni, W. Greuter & F. M. Raimondo [ed.]). – *Bocconea* 27(1) [77 pages].

Some funds have been (and can be) made available toward subsidising visits to PAL-Gr for the purpose of studying its collections, or collecting expeditions when one series of the collected material is being deposited in PAL-Gr. Please enquire.

The Herbarium PAL-Gr welcomes additions of well prepared and well labelled specimens, particularly from the Mediterranean area. It sees it as one of its core functions to preserve, process, and make publicly available on a permanent basis collections that might otherwise, in the medium or long term, become inaccessible or even be threatened in their existence. Refund of mailing costs is possible when required. Also, exchange is encouraged: PAL-Gr has substantial duplicate material available, or will have them available as the inventorying of some of the included herbaria proceeds. Subsidising collecting expeditions is another option that might be considered: please enquire.

The Greuter Library

The library associated with PAL-Gr is focused on floras and revisions world-wide, with emphasis on Mediterranean countries and Mediterranean-climate areas. It also holds Greuter’s reprint collection, all books reviewed by him in the OPTIMA Newsletter, and runs of numerous journals.

In the triennial 2013-2015, the library has grown substantially through purchase and gifts. A list of recently donated books can be seen at OPTIMA’s Web site (<http://www.optima-bot.org/herbarium/booksreceived.pdf>), and notices or reviews have been published both on the Web (http://www.optima-bot.org/Rec_publ/bookaccessions.pdf) and in recent issues of the OPTIMA Newsletter

(<http://www.optima-bot.org/publications/Newsletter/default.htm>). As per now, inventorying the library holdings has been completed, and binding is in progress.

ITINERA MEDITERRANEA COMMISSION

The Commission, together with the colleagues of the University of Tirana, led by Prof. Alfred Mullaj, is organizing the 13^o *Iter Mediterraneum* in Albania in the last decade of June 2017. The main focus of this mission will be on the mountain systems of Albania. A maximum of 12 foreign botanists plus some local ones are expected to participate to the field work, further details will be available on the OPTIMA website. Further missions in floristically poorly known areas of the Mediterranean are being planned for the following years.

FUNGI COMMISSION

Two Posters about the activities of the commission and local names of edible Fungi were presented during the XVII Congress of European Mycologists (Madeira, Portugal) held from 21th to 25th September 2015.

The Commission is going to prepare a manuscript on local names of fungi in Europe, North Africa and Saudi Arabia. In the meantime other mycologists asked to join the Commission and the list of local names was integrated with names from Portugal and Czech Republic.

LICHEN COMMISSION

The commission has supported a Lichenological Excursion to Armenia (15-23 June, 2015) organised by Arsen Gasparyan to collect lichens in the Khosrov Forest State Reserve, Aragats mountain, and visit the National parks: "Sevan Lake" and "Dilijan". Eleven international lichenologists participated on it.

During the three years the commission was active on searching financial support to stimulate the revision of specific different genera growing in the Mediterranean region. Into this line the Spanish Minis-

try of Economy and Competitiveness give to Ana Rosa Burgaz the Project CGL2013-41839-P "Study of the *Cladoniaceae* family in the Eurasiatic Mediterranean area" for a period Nov-2014 until Nov-2017.

Within this Project Ana Rosa Burgaz has been collecting *Cladonia* specimens in Croatia during 26th April - 3 May 2015 and in Hungary from 19 to 27 May 2015. In Georgia during 16-26 August 2015 some field recollections and reidentifications of the Tbilisi's lichen herbarium were done in collaboration with Teuvo Ahti (Helsinki).

Helmut Mayrhofer has published catalogues of the diversity of lichenized and lichenicolous fungi of the Albanian Alps of Kosovo and Montenegro; Macedonia (FYROM) and Slovenia.

- Strasser, E. A., Hafellner, J., Stešević, D., Geci, F. & Mayrhofer, H. 2015. Lichenized and lichenicolous fungi from the Albanian Alps (Kosovo, Montenegro). *Herzogia* 28: 520-544.

- Mayrhofer, H., Rohrer, A. & Bilovitz, P. O. 2013. Catalogue of the lichenized and lichenicolous fungi of Macedonia (FYROM). – *Phyton* (Horn, Austria) 53(1): 23–72.

- Mayrhofer, H. & Coppins, B. J. 2013. Remarkable records of lichenized fungi from Slovenia. – *Herzogia* 26: 201–206.

- Mayrhofer, H., Czeh, D., Kobald, E.-M. & Bilovitz, P. O. 2016. Catalogue of the lichenized and lichenicolous fungi of Kosovo. – *Herzogia* 29: in press.

In addition, Helmut Mayrhofer is still working on a catalogue of Croatia. Branka Knežević from Montenegro has started to prepare an updated catalogue of Montenegro with localities in co-operation with Helmut Mayrhofer.

- Lucia Muggia and Alexander Rohrer carried out field work in the mountains of northern Greece.

- During the XII OPTIMA Iter to Tunisia, held during the period 24 March – 4 April 2014, Anna Gutová (Institute of Botany SAS, Bratislava) collected lichen material from three regions of Northern Tunisia.

- Volker John in the past three years worked on a bibliography, checklist and distribution maps of the lichens in Turkey. A bibliographic checklist of Turkish lichens will be published this year (2016). With the help of Aysen Türk as a coauthor we will present a version in Turkish language. As a special contribution this list will also include Turkish Names for all the lichens and lichenicolous fungi known from Turkey.

- In 2014 a group of Turkish lichenologists and Volker John started the work on a lichen flora of Turkey. This illustrated flora will include the distribution maps mentioned above and is scheduled to be published in parts.

COMMISSION FOR KARYOSYSTEMATICS

The Commission prepares its “Mediterranean chromosome number reports” series edited by G. Kamari, C. Blanché & S. Šiljak-Yakovlev as a standing column in *Flora Mediterranea*. In the last 3 years, three columns of MCNR have been published corresponding to the volumes 23 (2013), 24 (2014) and 25 (2015).

The publication of this column reached this year its 25th edition and has successfully continued uninterrupted from 1991. So far, 1867 chromosome records have been published, covering most of the Mediterranean countries or territories included in the Med-Checklist, plus the Caucasus area and the Canary Islands. In the last three volumes (2013-2015), representing 78 published pages, a total of 99 new numbers have been reported (7 more than in the previous 3-year period), corresponding to a higher number of studied populations (some contributions reported data from up to 14 populations for a single MCNR).

Chromosome data are still being produced in constant rates by botanists dealing with Mediterranean flora and thus the Commission encourages the preparation of MCNR manuscripts by OPTIMA members to be sent to the editors before the end of September of each year, following the general instructions published in *Flora Mediterranea* cover and remembering that metaphase drawings are to be avoided and photographs must be of enough quality to be appropriately reproduced.

Ongoing projects

The vitality of chromosome numbers research and databasing appears to increase during the period 2013-2015. In addition to the existing Mediterranean databases, new electronic platforms (as CCDB), or new initiatives by members of our Commission as a new column for publication (Peruzzi L., Astuti G., Bartolucci F., Conti F., Rizzotto M., Roma-Marzio F. (2016) Chromosome numbers for the Italian flora: 1. Italian Botanist 1: 39–53. doi: 10.3897/italianbotanist.1.8818) or a monographic database (Bosch M., J. Simon J.

López-Pujol & C. Blanché (2016) - DCDB: an updated on-line database of chromosome numbers of tribe *Delphinieae* (*Ranunculaceae*) - BioC-GReB, - Dipòsit Digital de la Universitat de Barcelona - uri/handle: http://hdl.handle.net/2445/98702) among others, were considered.

During the meeting of the Commission in Montpellier (5 - 7 June 2016) was agreed to:

1) change the current name of the column “Mediterranean Chromosome Number Reports” in *Flora Mediterranea* for a most comprehensive title recognizing the true scope of the contributions usually published (which include, karyotype analysis, evolutionary consequences, bibliographic critical review, as well as biogeographical considerations, taxonomic remarks etc., derived from chromosome studies). The proposed new title for the series is: Mediterranean Chromosome Data - 26.

2) include in the next volume of *Flora Mediterranea* a short introductory notice in the first page of the series, informing on this change and additional instructions to the authors.

3) study, with the Editors of *Flora Mediterranea*, of a better way to recognize authorship of contributions in the Web of Knowledge and other indexations, particularly if the Journal will receive some impact score. Was suggested to separate indexation for each contribution as “Author A, Author B & Author C” in G. Kamari, C. Blanché & S. Šiljak-Yakovlev (eds.). This to satisfy the needs of young researchers to be appropriately recognized in publication indices, and to enrol new contributors to the OPTIMA columns.

COMMISSION FOR COMMON NAMES

Contacts: Based on the current Commission membership, contacts are being established with experts from different countries and institutions with the aim of obtaining vetted lists of common-language names, in selected languages, suitable for database import.

Portal: Negotiations with the OPTIMA Secretariat in Palermo and, through it, with the biodiversity informatics team in Berlin are progressing, with a view to permit access to the assembled data through a suitable portal, eg., Euro+Med Plantbase.

Development: During the initial test phase, use is being made of existing full datasets such as those already available through Euro+Med Plantbase. Four test languages are being used (Armenian, French, Czech, and Hebrew), also to assess the problems associated with different alphabets and diacritical signs.

Progress: In cooperation with Tela Botanica, criteria for the selection of the most appropriate French common names are being developed. Detailed guidelines have been made available through the «Lettre d'information sur l'actualité de la botanique francophone du site Tela Botanica».

For Italy, a working group of the Sezione per la Floristica, Sistematica ed Evoluzione of the Italian Botanical Society has been set up, with the purpose of establishing a list of recommended Italian common names for all vascular plant taxa that occur on the national territory of Italy. When ready, the list of recommended Italian names will be submitted to the Italian Botanical Society to be approved as the recommended national standard.

COMMISSION ON MEDITERRANEAN TYPE MATERIAL

The members of the commission published several articles about typification of names of plants described from the Mediterranean. In particular the article by Peruzzi L. & al. 2015 “An inventory of the names of vascular plants endemic to Italy, their loci classici and types”. *Phytotaxa* 196(1): 1-217 is the census of the loci classici of the 1,400 Italian endemic vascular plants.

The activities of the commission for the next three years will be focused in giving a unified vision of the work done by single members in order to provide a useful tool for those who need information in this field.

The commission has discussed the possibility to develop a database of the typifications of Mediterranean plants names. The members will be involved in testing the DB developed in Bratislava for such purpose.

COMMISSION FOR THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE ON MEDITERRANEAN PLANTS

The main task of the Commission is preparing the book *Mediterranean Landscapes* for publication until the end of the year 2016 and the editor, O. Vasić, is making all the needed efforts to homogenize in the form the received contributions and prepare the volume for the press.

COMMISSION FOR MEDITERRANEAN ETHNOBOTANY

This commission was strongly supported during the XV OPTIMA Meeting held in Montpellier (France) in 2016 with the aim of being a collector and a booster of the activities carried on by the botanists involved in ethnobotany in the Mediterranean countries.

PRIZE COMMISSION

The members of the commission met electronically at the beginning of 2016 in order to propose to the International Board Prof. Francesco Maria Raimondo for the OPTIMA gold Medal. This prize is awarded every three years to a botanist who, by his or her activity, is considered to have made an outstanding contribution to the phytotaxonomy of the Mediterranean area.

Laudatio by Professor Werner Greuter

It is a very great pleasure for me to present OPTIMA's highest award to our President. Receiving this Gold Medal (the genuine stuff!), which honours a lifetime's achievement in promoting Mediterranean botany, is a crowning event in a botanist's career; which of course does not imply that it should mark the end of a career that, I am sure, will go on for decades to come. I became acquainted with my dear friend Franco Raimondo in 1977, at the second OPTIMA Meeting in Florence, when he immediately and enthusiastically embraced the notion and goals of OPTIMA, to become member of its Executive Council in 1989, be elected Vice-President in 1995, and be our President for the last 9 years. He has organised the OPTIMA Meetings in Palermo in 1983, 2001, and 2013, being the only person to have hosted more than one such event. But

his activities are not confined to OPTIMA, he has many more achievements to his credit. He has, for instance, served for two terms as President of the Italian Botanical Society, an association that exceeds OPTIMA in size and wealth if not prestige, and has contributed greatly, with his expertise and energy, to the prosperity of that Society. One great venture in Raimondo's professional life is the plan – not yet achieved but actively pursued – of a renewed Herbarium Mediterraneum Panormitanum, an institution designed to play a pivotal role in Mediterranean botanical research. Jointly with his then boss Andrea Di Martino, he announced the idea to the scientific world, in 1977, at the first Jornadas de Taxonomía Vegetal in Sevilla. By then he had already convinced the Palermo Province to acquire buildings suitable for the purpose. With his awesome gift of fund-raiser he was quick to attract monies to endow an International Foundation “Pro Herbario Mediterraneo”, set up to support his project. Even though, as life goes, we are still struggling to see Raimondo's high-flying plans completed, much has already been achieved. The buildings are there; they are progressively being equipped and made ready to receive and house Palermo's herbaria, which since 2013 proudly bear the designation “OPTIMA Herbarium”. These collections await your visit to study them – and also your contribution in kind: of plants and books. I take the opportunity to thank all those, here present or not, who have contributed by their donation of books and plant specimens to the herbarium and library of OPTIMA, and will hopefully continue to do so. I could spend hours on end speaking of Raimondo's scientific merits, which are the basic reason for the present award. He has published more than 400 papers and dozens of books. I will content myself to mention two particularly significant contributions of his. The first, unsurprisingly, concerns his home country Sicily – really a country of its own, even though it belongs to Italy. Franco is Sicilian to the core. Although he has travelled abroad, has even been visiting professor in Somalia three times, Sicily, and within Sicily, Palermo, has always been his home. His roots are in Palermo Province, in Castelbuono, a borough in the Madonie mountains that may feel honoured today along with himself. The work I have in mind is the “Catalogue of plants growing in Sicily”, a volume of almost 600 pages published in 2007, of which Raimondo is only the second author but which he has written in large part

himself. The second item I want to highlight is special on more than one account. He as the author, as may happen only to the prominent, did not know of it until the day when it was published. It is a sizeable book, dedicated to him on the occasion of his 70th birthday, assembling over 100 introductions, prefaces and dedications that he wrote to the books of others. The title reads “Contributions to the promotion of the culture of botany”, and it is indeed related to the entire culture surrounding botanical sciences. The prefaced books, while partly botanical, are also devoted to the arts, to biography, are reprints of classical texts or exhibition catalogues – organising exhibits being Raimondo's cherished hobby. The overwhelming variety of the prefaced books stands for Raimondo's own, vast scientific and cultural achievements. Franco, I wish you many more years of endeavour, success, and happiness.

This text is also available at <http://www.optima-bot.org/index.php/en/18-awards-en/gold-medals-en/46>.

The commission proposed to the Executive Council the following volumes for the Silver medals with the relevant motivations:

- Jean-Marc Tison, Philippe Jauzein & Henri Michaud (2014): Flore de la France méditerranéenne continentale;

This is a critical Flora, as it includes numerous and sometimes quite extensive notes. It is also an illustrated Flora, as a large majority of recognised (numbered) taxa are represented by analytical drawings. To some extent it even qualifies as a pictorial Flora; and indeed the colour photographs at the end, being limited to a selection of just 21 genera, are excellent identification aids. The plant groups thus represented are the orchids (100 photographs), *Compositae* (79: 69 *Hieracium*, 10 *Tragopogon*), “*Liliiflorae*” (75: 36 *Allium*, 24 *Tulipa*, 15 *Iridaceae*), *Orobanche* (42), *Crassulaceae* (39), *Opuntia* (15), *Aristolochia* (12), *Pinguicula* (10), and *Melampyrum* (6). It is a real pity that there is no reference to these (unnumbered) photographs in the main text, nor even in the index: one has to know or to guess, or one will miss them. Floras arranged according to the last cry of phylogenetic systematics are still the exception, and the present one is among these exceptions. Within families, genera and species are also arranged by known or perceived affinity, with the single exception of *Umbelliferae* where the sequence is alphabetical. The treatment of notoriously difficult

groups, one of the standards by which to judge “critical” Floras, varies widely. For example, *Rosa* and *Rubus* are dealt with rather summarily, with very broadly delimited species, or for some of the brambles down to subsectional level only; whereas *Hieracium* and *Taraxacum* have received full and remarkably skilled attention. Their accounts will stand as models far beyond the limited geographical range for which they were written. All in all, this Flora stands as a milestone in French botany. Its authors deserve our gratitude and admiration for a huge amount of work well done.

- Mohamed Fennane, Mohammed Ibn Tattou & Jalal El-Oualidi (eds.) (2014): Flore pratique du Maroc. Manuel de détermination des plantes vasculaires. Volume 3, Dicotyledones (p.p.), Monocotyledones;

To date, Morocco was the last among the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea to lack a completed descriptive manual of its flora, a work permitting, by means of descriptions and keys, the identification of its plants. The *Flore pratique du Maroc* fill this gap. The two first volumes (see OPTIMA Newsletter 38: (16). 2008) were published in 1999 and 2007 as volumes 36 and 38 of the same prestigious monograph series of the Institut Scientifique in Rabat, better known by its former attribute Chérifien. The present, concluding volume encompasses the treatments of the last dicot families (*Rubiaceae* to *Compositae*) and of all monocots. The family key and illustrated glossary are again included, and there is a cumulative index of genera for all volumes. The presentation is elegant yet concise, avoiding details such as nomenclatural source and type citations that would be of scant interest for the botanical practitioner. The work as a whole is the essential instrument required for the formation of a new generation of keen Moroccan botanists. It must not be seen as a concluding event but as the door to ongoing studies leading, in a not too remote future, to an even better understanding and fuller knowledge of the extraordinary riches and variety of the vascular plants of Morocco.

- Enio Nardi (2015): Il genere *Aquilegia* L. (*Ranunculaceae*) in Italia. The genus *Aquilegia* (*Ranunculaceae*) in Italy. *Aquilegiarum italicarum in europae-arum conspectus descriptio.*

The author presents us with a comprehensive monographic revision of the columbines of Africa and Europe. All 54 species recognised by the author are treated in full, each with synonymy, description, specimen enumeration, notes, and indication of habitat, distribution, phenology, etc. Those 18 that occur in, and 11 of which are endemic to, Italy are treated in greater detail, with keys (one to identify herbarium material, another for live plants), illustrations, and maps of their Italian distribution.

The species treated here are only a fraction of the known columbines (80 to 400 species worldwide, depending on different authors' concepts), and Europe is not the primary centre of diversity or origin for the genus. Southern Europe does, however, show secondary centres of diversity and speciation, to name the Balkan, Apennine and Pyrenean peninsulas and the Tyrrhenian islands. Europe is also the arguably main source of names published in the past under *Aquilegia* and the unchallenged centre of disparity of taxonomic concepts applied to the plants. Nardi's monograph has successfully faced the challenge of defining and applying criteria for species-level classification that are based on a whole-population concept, noting but discounting individual aberrations, ontogenetic and environment-induced variation, and the effects of introgressive hybridisation. He thus applies modern concepts supported by a lifetime's study of the plants in the wild and extrapolating the experience thus assembled to other, non-Italian populations.

The columbines are easy to treat in certain respects, e.g. by not presenting problems of generic delimitation; but they also present traits that make their classification hazardous, such as the general crossability, often indeed full interfertility of its component species; the lack of distinctive karyological differences (all appear to have a uniform karyotype with $2n = 14$ small chromosomes, no polyploidy or aneuploidy having so far been reported); and the loss, in pressed and dried material, of taxonomically relevant features such as colour and spatial configuration of the perianth. In order to better understand and interpret the observed diversity, Nardi has delved into aspects of the spatio-temporal development of the genus, from its presumed E Asian origin to its currently displayed chorological and variational patterns, taking into account pollination biology in particular. All this, and much more, is embedded in the general introductory part of the book,

which provides fluidly and elegantly written information on many subjects of general interest to biologists, far beyond *Aquilegia* taxonomy.

The book is bilingual (English and Italian) throughout, except for some elements, such as synonymies, specimen enumerations, and Appendices, that are in Latin, or treated as such, to avoid unnecessary duplication. The Italian species are illustrated by drawings of unstated authorship but mostly initialled AM (Anne Maury). No nomenclatural novelties are included (required new names have all been validated in precursory papers), but numerous type designations are effected in a 50-page appendix discussing the typification of all relevant names and synonyms. An impressively thorough bibliography (55 pages) is found at the end.

Nardi's monograph is the result of a botanist's lifetime of study and endeavour, skilfully presented, devoted to a fascinating genus.

Complete accounts for these books are available in the OPTIMA Newsletter 42(2): (6-9) 2015 and 43(2): (2) 2016.

OPTIMA Silver Medals are awarded every three years to the authors of the best papers or books on

the phytotaxonomy of the Mediterranean area that were published in the preceding three-year period.

The recommendations of the commission were approved and the prizes were awarded in Montpellier the 11 June 2016 during the closing ceremony of the XV OPTIMA Meeting.

WEB COMMISSION

This commission, resurrected on mandate of the International board and Executive Council met in June 2016, approved the new layout of the website that is already available on the web (www.optima-bot.org) in order to have a fresh and attractive look on the internet to give an updated association's image and attract a larger number of potential members also among the youngest and non-professional botanists. The change of layout, apparently only formal, is, in fact, a radical change of architecture. Previously the website has been based on individual objects; today the content of each page is a database record shown in a common frame.

M E E T I N G S

by Gianniantonio Domina

The XV OPTIMA Meeting

The XV OPTIMA meeting was held in Montpellier (France) from 6 to 11 June 2016. It was organised under the partnership of Tela Botanica, the Conservatoire Botanique National Méditerranéen de Porquerolles, and the University of Montpellier. OPTIMA si è avvantaggiata di questi partner che hanno fornito una location academica per lo svolgimento dei simposi e hanno portato i congressisti for the mid congress excursion on the Causse du Larzac near Le Caylar the southern edge of the Massif Central and to the templar village La Couvertourade . In linea con le edizioni precedenti the XV OPTIMA Meeting was attended by ca. 230 botanists from 25 countries. There were 17 half-day symposia, not counting a general opening lecture by Suzanne Amigues on Theophrastus and the birth of botanical knowledge, a memorial symposium, two open workshops and half a day being devoted to a poster session. On the whole 86 lectures and 74 posters were presented. The titles of symposia were: Botanical systematics and taxonomy in France: recent insights, The Mediterranean marine algae, Plant conservation in

France, in situ approaches, Advanced methods in plant systematics, The changing role of botanic gardens in the Mediterranean, Biogeography and conservation of the flora of the small Mediterranean islands, Lichens biodiversity exploration in the Mediterranean region, Ex situ conservation in Mediterranean France, New advances in bryophytes research in the Mediterranean region, Speciation by hybridization and polyploidy in the Mediterranean, Urban plant diversity in the Mediterranean, The flora of the Irano-Turanian region: new biogeographical perspectives and conservation, The role of amateur networks in Mediterranean botany, The impact of fire on the Mediterranean vegetation, Useful plants of the Mediterranean, Mediterranean plants phylogeography, Alien invasive species in the Mediterranean. All the symposia were fully participated and emerged many insights even for joint researches.

A large part of the presentations are available on the website of the congress (<http://www.optima2016.org/en/programme-2/>) and all the abstracts are collected in the Book of Abstracts available also on the web (<http://www.optima-bot.org/meetings/XVAbstracts.pdf>).

The Open workshops “Advances and organization of a Flora of Algeria and Magreb on the Web” and “Round trip from Red List data to in situ conservation of Important Plant Areas” were very operative and their participants were actively involved in the topics.

The memorial symposium for Pierre Quézel organized by Frederic Medail, anticipated by the memory of Avinoam Danin, presented by Ori Fragman Sapir, has been very touching and gave the opportunity to those who have not got to know him to appreciate the human as well as scientific qualities of this man. At the end, the Congress dinner at the Maison des Relations Internationales, thanks to the involvement of the Mayor of Montpellier and his staff, was a pleasant social event that gave the possibility to appreciate the French and international cuisine in the garden of an historic villa.

Appointment in the first week of October 2019 to the XVI OPTIMA meeting that will be held in Athens organized by the staff of professor Pepi Bareka of the Agricultural Faculty of the University.

M E E T I N G A N N O U N C E M E N T S

19-21 April 2017

Sustainable Restoration of Mediterranean Forests

Analysis and perspective within the context of bio-based economy development under global changes

Palermo, Italy

This congress represents the first international congress organized by the Italian Society of Forest Restoration (ISFR) jointly with other international institutions. Its organization has been strongly urged by ISFR to discuss about the principles and technical

aspects which must drive forest adaptation and restoration, particularly in Mediterranean regions where the effects of global risk to affect irremediably this natural resource. Moreover, the congress ambition is also to draw attention to the fact no worldwide bio-economy could be built if sustainable forest management does not become the central item in the political agenda of all the governmental executives.

For further information see:

<https://www.palermocongress2017.com>

20-24 June 2016

IAVS 2017 Annual Symposium

Palermo, Italy

The 2017 Annual Symposium of The International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) will be held on June 20-24, 2017 in Palermo, Italy. The theme will be "Vegetation patterns in natural and cultural landscapes". The symposium venue will be the Palermo Botanical Garden. The symposium will have Pre-symposium and post symposium excursions. The pre-symposium excursion will be from from 11 to 18 June. The focus will be on coastal landscapes of Sicily: Along the Sicilian coast, from Capo San Vito (NW Sicily) to Capo Passero (SE Sicily), including two days on the Island of Marettimo. The post-symposium excursion will be from 25 June to the first of July and will visit the Sicilian Mountains: Etna, Nebrodi and Madonie.

For further information see:

<http://iavs.org/Meetings/2017-Annual-Symposium.aspx>

26-30 June 2016

BGCI's 6th Global Botanic Gardens Congress

Geneva, Switzerland

With the aim of stimulating discussion and innovative reflections on the role and relevance of botanic gardens in society, was organized the 6th Global Botanic Gardens Congress in 2017. The scientific programme will focus on botanic gardens' role in solving the major environmental challenges for society – food security, water scarcity, energy, health, loss of biodiversity and climate change. Major topics will include plant conservation, education and outreach, botanic garden management challenges and communicating the big issues via landscaping, with workshops and discussion sessions organised during the course of the meeting to address specific issues. We hope that the botanic garden community, its associated horticultural experts, scientists, educators, communicators, directors and

managers will have the chance to collectively and collaboratively explore and develop different visions of botanic gardens and their core activities for the future.

For further information see:

<http://www.6gbgc.org>

23-29 July 2017

XIX International Botanical Congress

Shenzhen, China

The International Botanical Congress (IBC) is a major convention that brings together scientists from around the world to discuss new research in the plant sciences. The IBC is held once every six years. The Congresses are particularly notable in that they not only bring together scientists from many countries, but also from many disciplines within the broader research fields related to the plant sciences, including botany, mycology, ecology, horticulture, agriculture, and other related fields. The increasing knowledge about plants—their history, growth, uses, interactions with other organisms, and roles in the ecosystem—is becoming progressively important for the stability and sustainability of the human endeavour and, indeed, of all life on Earth.

The XIX IBC will be held under the auspices of the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS), through the International Association of Botanical and Mycological Societies (IABMS) of the IUBS. The XIX IBC is organized by the Botanical Society of China and the Shenzhen Municipal Government. It will be held in the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center, Shenzhen, China. The first circular will be sent in 2015 to all botanists and institutions through society mailings and upon request.

As usual the IBC will be preceded by the Nomenclature Session. This time from 17 to 21 July. This session is devoted to amend the Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants (Melbourne Code).

For further information see:

<http://www.abc2017.cn>

11-13 September 2017

Global Conference on Plant Science and Molecular Biology

Valencia, Spain

The Global Conference on Plant Science and Molecular Biology' will bring together a collection of investigators who are at the forefront of their field, and will provide opportunities for junior scientists and graduate students to interactively present their work and exchange ideas with established senior scientists. This program will include workshops, symposia, poster sessions and special discussions on wide range of session themes on plant sciences from Plant diseases to Plant biology, Horticulture and Medicinal and aromatic plant science.

For further information see: <http://plant-science-biology-conferences.magnusgroup.org>