

## Botanical Garden of the Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration (1889–2014)

The oldest university botanical garden in Croatia, the Botanical Garden of the Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, this year, through a variety of events, celebrates 125 years of continuous work. Throughout its existence, the Garden has operated within the University, at first as a part of the Faculty of Philosophy, while today it belongs to the Faculty of Science. It has always had an important role in university teaching, scientific research and professional work in the field of botany, as well as in educating the public about the importance of joint actions with the aim of protecting and preserving the wealth of the national flora.

The idea that it was necessary to establish a botanical garden within the Botany and Physiology Department of the Faculty of Philosophy originated with Dr Bohuslav Jiruš (1841–1901), the first professor of botany in the University of Zagreb. He was fully supported by the then rector of the University, Dr Stjepan Spevec (1839–1905). At the University's initiative, in 1884 the Royal *Land* Government decided to constitute a botanical garden for the Royal University. The idea was put into action in 1889 by the university professor of botany, Dr Antun Heinz (1861–1919). 120 years ago, the location of the Garden was on the outskirts of a city with a population of only 38,000. The largest part of the Garden was set in the English landscape style with winding paths and freely growing groups of trees and shrubs. Only the *flower parterre* in the southern side of the greenhouses was constructed in the French style of strict order and symmetry.

Today, the Botanical Garden is an integral part of a sequence of handsome old Zagreb squares and parks known by the name of *Lenuci's* or the *Green Horseshoe*. Because of its great educational, cultural, historical and touristic values and its overall significance for Zagreb and Croatia, since 1971 the Garden has been statutorily protected as a *Monument of Park Architecture*.



**Fig. 1.** The Main Entrance to the Royal University Botanical Garden, 1900.



**Fig. 2.** Flower parterre with a view of greenhouses, around 1920.

Only a decade after its foundation, the Garden already had a diverse plant collection, which today numbers more than 5,000 plant taxa. Winter resistant woody plants (shrubs and trees) are grown in the arboretum, while sensitive species from warm climates overwinter in the greenhouses. Decorative perennials are cultivated in the *flower parterre*, around the small lakes and in the flowerbeds of the *flower rainbow*. Particularly valuable parts of the collection are indigenous plants, belonging to the rich and diverse native flora, grown in phytogeographical groups – rock gardens. According to new legislation, growing in the Botanical Garden at this moment are 109 statutorily strictly protected vascular plant species of Croatian flora (13.6% of all), 46 taxa from the *Red Book of Vascular Flora of Croatia* (19.5% of categories RE, CR, EN and VU), and seven NATURA-2000-species of interest to the European Union (38.9% of all). The two most recognized Croatian endemics, the Velebit degenia (*Degenia velebitica*) and Dubrovnik cornflower (*Centaurea ragusina*), are periodically available for purchase. Tropical and subtropical plants are cultivated in the greenhouses, and are displayed in the open during summer. Marsh plants grow in the small lakes, the ponds and in the little domed greenhouse in the *flower parterre*. An important part of the collection is also situated in the systematic field, intended for university teaching in botany.

Recent activities of the Botanical Garden fulfil all the conditions from the widely accepted definition of botanical gardens and their difference from other public gardens and parks. Accordingly, a botanical garden is an institution holding documented collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, display and education. Hence, our plant collection is properly documented and has been used for more than a century in university research and the teaching of botany. The Garden has also been open to the public without an entrance fee from its beginning. A variety of educational and popularization activities organized by the Garden curators attract the attention of many visitors, which is evident from the fact that the Garden is the third most visited tourist site in Zagreb.

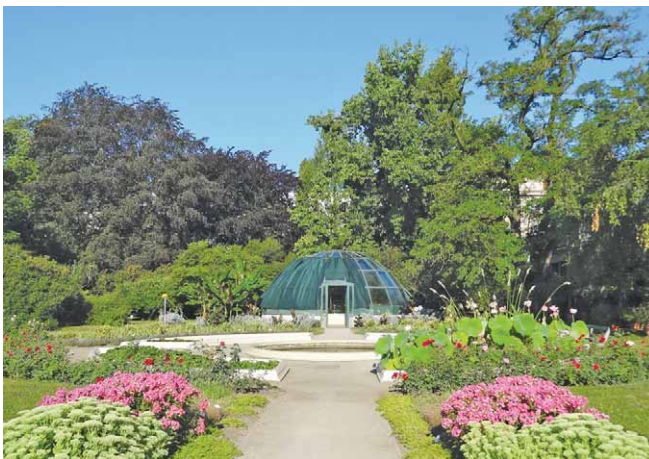
The Garden is a member of the *Botanical Gardens Conservation International* (BGCI), an assembly of nearly 1,000 botanical gardens in the world, as well as the *International Plant Exchange Network* (IPEN). These memberships greatly facilitate our efforts to develop different activities, within our financial constraints, by sharing the experiences with



**Fig. 3.** Fountain and ponds with water lilies, 1924.

other botanical gardens around the globe. The activities of botanical gardens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are largely devoted to research, conservation of wild plants and public education. Botanical gardens around the world, like ours, contribute to the accomplishment of a number of adopted international conventions and agreements, with the common goal of preserving and protecting rare and endangered plant species.

With the restoration of the *exhibition pavilion* in 2007, the Garden acquired a representative venue for exhibition and education, intended for various workshops, lectures and exhibitions, related to the marvellous world of plants. Those events are exceptionally well attended, e.g. the *Fantastic Forest* exhibition, organized on the occasion of the International year of forests in 2011, was visited by more than 11,000 people in only five months, along with more than 4,000 foreign tourists. Every year the exhibition pavilion hosts several dozen workshops for children and adults, dedicated to plants in the broadest sense. Since most



**Fig. 4.** Fountain and ponds, 2014.



**Fig. 5.** Workshop *Botanical magic: let's play at making a herbarium!* held during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Croatian Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, 2013.

children who live in cities have few opportunities to grow plants, a small *children's flower and vegetable garden* was also set up in our Botanical Garden. With the help of their teachers and Garden staff, children from the nearby school and kindergarten sow and plant their own flowers and vegetables, and nurture them during the season until the autumn harvest.

During the entire 2014 season different events are going to take place in the Garden to mark the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The program is beginning in April with opening of the Botanical Garden to visitors and awarding prizes to junior winners of the quiz held during the 2013 exhibition on Croatia's contribution to EU-wide *Natura 2000* ecological network. The 4<sup>th</sup> *Week of Croatian Botanical Gardens and Arboreta* opening ceremony will be held in our Garden on May 12, for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row organized by the Section of Croatian Botanical Gardens and Arboreta within the Croatian Botanical Society. The members of the *European Botanic Gardens Consortium* (EBGC), national representatives of botanical gardens from EU countries, Switzerland and Norway, meet in our Garden for the first time in June. Their regular meeting is going to be held prior to the celebration ceremony at the invitation of the Garden's manager and Croatian representative to EBGC. The central ceremony marking the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Garden, attended by the representatives of the Croatian government, the City of Zagreb and the University of Zagreb will be organized in the Hall of the University. National representatives of the EBGC will join the anniversary celebration ceremony. In September, the Garden is hosting the annual garden party of the University of Zagreb, to mark the beginning of the 346<sup>th</sup> academic year.

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