

Professor Zinka Pavletić – Croatian Botanist. On the occasion of her seventieth birthday



It is always a pleasure to wish a happy birthday to a person with a rich experience in life, a person who brought knowledge, emotions and her heart into our lives. Such a person, who has left a deep mark on the entire generation of Croatian botanists of today, is Professor Zinka Pavletić.

Prof. Dr. Zinka Pavletić (nee Horvatin) was born in Zagreb on November 3rd 1934, where she attended elementary school and in 1953 graduated from the 8th Gymnasium. In 1958 she gained a B.Sc. in Biology from the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the University of Zagreb, with a thesis from the field of botany. She completed the M.Sc. graduate course at the same Faculty in 1964 with a thesis entitled »Morphologic research of the *Centaurea ragusina* L. achene«, and in 1973 completed a PhD in Biological Sciences with a thesis entitled »Flora and vegetation of the Isle of Biševo, with particular focus on the phytogeographic position of the island.« Both of these theses were made under the mentorship of well-known botanist and professor of systematic botany at the University of Zagreb at the time, Professor Radovan Domac.

From the first days of her working career, Professor Pavletić was involved with work dealing with botanical issues. She began her career in 1959 as an assistant at the Faculty of Agriculture, Univ. Zagreb, and worked there until 1962 when she moved to the Institute for Botany, Univ. Zagreb. In 1967 she became an assistant at the Department of Botany, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of the University of Zagreb. She settled there and worked on promotion of the field of botany until her retirement in 2000. She was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1980, in the field of flora and plant taxonomy, in 1988 she was elected an Assistant Professor and in 1996 a full Professor at the same faculty.

On numerous occasions she spent time on longer or shorter sabbaticals at different foreign botanical institutions (Stuttgart, Zurich, Graz, Uppsala, Seattle, Omaha etc.). She also participated in numerous international expert and scientific excursions, studying primarily the flora and vegetation of the Mediterranean coast, but also of the wider European continent (Italy, Spain, Greece, Sicily, Sardinia, Turkey, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Norway, etc.) Due to favourable circumstances, for a few consecutive years she had the opportunity to study the plant world of the desert, prairie and mountain areas of the North American continent. All these study visits helped build her into an expert in plant taxonomy and flora.

From her election to the rank of Senior Lecturer up to retirement, Professor Zinka Pavletić held lectures in numerous botanical classes at the Biology Department of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, such as Cormobionta and Special Botany II (to 3rd year students of B.Ed. courses), General Botany and General Botany II (to 1st year stu-

dents of all courses), Morphology, 3rd year of Ecology course), and field classes in Botany (for the 1st and 3rd years of the Biology curriculum). Concurrently with giving these lectures at the Department of Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Professor Pavletić was a coordinator and co-lecturer of Biology for Chemical Engineers course (1st year) at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. For these courses she wrote the course materials »Morphology«, »Cormobionta« and »Botany field work« for 1st year biology students of all courses. It should be pointed out that she introduced a new elective course into the course, »Nomenclature and Plant Determination,« aimed at all courses and years of Biology programme – a course that still today evokes large interest among students and that has encouraged many young botanists to orient themselves towards floristic research.

She proved herself an exceptional lecturer, gifted with the ability to transfer knowledge to the younger generations suggestively. Through her interesting lectures, containing numerous examples from the life that surrounds us, she knew how to bring beauty and the quintessence of botany to all students, regardless of their primary interests during the course of their studies, and positively contributed to the sound botanical education of many generations of biologists, particularly of those who continued to work in schools all across Croatia. As a professor of botany she also worked for a number of years at the Faculty of Natural and Mathematical Sciences and Education of the University of Split, where she left a visible mark in the cultivation and education of numerous future secondary education teachers, as well as of young botanists, particularly university assistants in botany.

Professor Zinka Pavletić was first and foremost a dedicated and meticulous mentor to students and younger colleagues, and under her guidance more than forty graduate, nine master's and five doctoral theses were written and defended. It can be rightly said that owing to the efforts of Professor Pavletić botany in Croatia, despite the former bad employment policy will not die out. Her selfless dedication and fighting spirit, whenever necessary, made possible the employment and education of younger botanical professionals. Her absolute encouragement, support and faith in the young and their ideas, ensured that even after her retirement a number of young botanists, florists and taxonomists remain in her group for systematics and flora, who continue the effort for further development of this field.

The scientific activity of Professor Zinka Pavletić includes the fields of flora, taxonomy, geobotany and vegetation research into the higher plants, primarily members of the Croatian flora. She conducted floristic research in different areas of Croatia, in continental, lowlands, highlands and Adriatic, while her floristic research into the Central Dalmatian isles is particularly important. This research deals primarily with the total analysis of a certain area, the analysis of rare and endemic species and with floristic analysis of certain communities. Her taxonomical works deal with the problematics of endemic species or lower taxa within the genera *Daucus*, *Silene*, *Crocus*, *Festuca*, etc. Geobotanical research encompasses research into plant dissemination, the vegetation of certain areas or particular plant communities important in vegetation of Croatia.

During her rich and fruitful scientific work, Professor Pavletić published over seventy articles on her research, in both national and international publications. She participated with presentations at more than forty international and national scientific congresses.

She worked, either as a leader or as an associate on numerous important scientific projects, to mention only a few, such as »Flora Analytica Iugoslaviae«, »Flora of SR Croatia«, »Vegetation map of SR Croatia«, »Research of Croatian flora« and »Phytocenological-syntaxonomical researches of the Mediterranean vegetation«.

She is a member of numerous scientific and professional societies, such as the Croatian Biological Society, Croatian Ecological Society, Croatian Natural Society, Ostalpin-Dinarische Gesellschaft für Vegetationskunde, Amicale internationale de phytosociologie (France – Bailleul-Camerino), OPTIMA – Organisation pour l'étude phyto-taxonomique de la Région Mediterraneene etc.

Outside the university, Professor Pavletić's professional activities included numerous educational lectures, field trips and seminar works for B.Ed. Biology graduates working in primary and secondary education, encouraging the lifelong education and interest of school teachers in botany and the transfer of that interest to their pupils. She worked vigorously on the publication of school books, where her simple yet condensed style, was maximally adapted to the age of the pupils (biology handbooks for 7th grade of primary school and 2nd grade of grammar school, published by »Profil«). She was also a long term consulting editor for biology handbooks, as well as for numerous other publications of professional botanical literature published by Školska knjiga. For over twenty years she has been a member of the State committee for the movement »Nauku mladima« (now called »Znanost mladima«) and a coordinator for the botany »Summer school for young biologists«. From October 15th 1991 she was the president of the Republic Committee for the teaching of Biology and Nature, appointed by the Department for Schools, Ministry of Education and Culture, and from May 24th 1991 the president of the Republic Committee for the drafting of the Biology Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Schools, appointed by the Department for Schools, Ministry of Education and Culture.

It should also particularly be mentioned that Professor Pavletić, during her entire working life, worked on the popularisation of botany. She held numerous lectures and led expert field trips in the seminars for B.Ed. Biology, for the Croatian Biological Society, at the Open University, as well as for other societies interested in the field of botany. She published numerous popular articles in the magazine for the popularisation of natural sciences *Priroda*. She also translated a few botany books (from German) and participated in the production of three studies on the plants of some areas in Croatia.

The bright trail left by Professor Pavletić in the history of Croatian botany, and particularly in education and raising of young botanists, has not faded. Although retired, she has not stopped writing and publishing the results of her long term researches, and always finds time for constructive discussions with younger colleagues, whom she receives with love and respect, always with good advice and support to offer to them. That is the reason why she always receives a hearty welcome in the academic community, among younger colleagues, and we can wish that good health and high spirits remain with her for many years to come, so that we may enjoy her enthusiasm of life and the rich knowledge of an experienced botanist.

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