



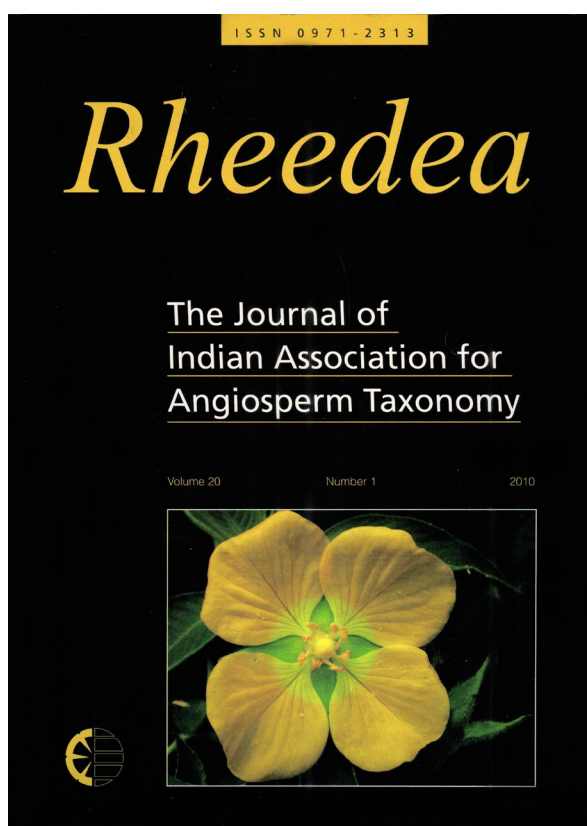
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Birth Centenary of G.H.M. Lawrence 19th June 2010

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Birth Centenary of G.H.M. Lawrence 19th June 2010



George Hill Mathewson Lawrence (1910 – 1978) was an acclaimed American botanist, bibliographer, archivist and plant taxonomist. Though he played several roles and contributed much to the development of plant taxonomy in general and that of domesticated plants in particular, his best known work is *Taxonomy of Vascular Plants*, first published in 1951 and which ran into many editions. Along with his *Introduction to Plant Taxonomy* (1954), a sleek but pithy volume, *Taxonomy of Vascular Plants* constitutes a finest summary of the subject available till date and continues to attract teachers and students alike across the world and both are deservedly prescribed as text books in many Universities in India and abroad.

Lawrence was born on 19th June 1910 at East Greenwich, Rhode Island. Studied at Cornell

University, New York where he also obtained his Ph. D. Botany in 1939 and secured his Professorship later. He worked with the celebrated L.H. Bailey, an authority on cultivated plants. He along with others helped Bailey to bring out his book on *Manual of Cultivated Plants* (1948) with beautiful illustrations by Florence Mekeel (Mrs. Harry Lambeth) and Marion E. Ruff (Mrs. Marion Ruff Sheehan). (These artworks reappeared in Lawrence's *Taxonomy of Vascular Plants*). He later became Director of Bailey Hortorium (now part of the Department of Plant Biology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University, USA) where he founded the journal *Baileya*, in honour of his mentor for dissemination of knowledge on cultivated plants (discontinued in the 1990s). In 1960 he was made the founder Director of the Hunt Botanical Library (rechristened later as Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation of Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA) based on a nucleus collection of literature made by Rachel McMaster Miller Hunt. It was largely through the good team work, able guidance and creative imagination of Dr. Lawrence that Hunt Institute became a world renowned Centre for biohistorical research and botanical bibliography. Hunt Institute currently holds a large collection of portraits of botanists, handwritten manuscripts, biographies and botanical paintings.

Lawrence was undoubtedly an authority on several cultivated genera of flowering plants like *Iris*, *Armeria*, *Hedera*, *Crocus*, *Passiflora*, *Cissus*, *Lilium*, etc. and he published excellent treatises on them.

He passed away on 11th June 1978. He will continue to live in the minds of botanists through his books.

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