Native species for ornamental use

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Worldwide, the economic potential of native species as ornamental plants is still not well explored. More research on physiological and morphological characteristics is needed to adapt native crops for different applications (cut flowers, landscaping and urban tree planting) and offer new options to the ornamental plant market. In this volume, "New Crops, New Uses," the reader is invited to discover new ornamental species as well as new uses for native and cultivated plants.

International trends in floriculture are changing rapidly. Currently, the global flower market prizes for product quality and variety. Brazil's climatic diversity favors the cultivation of a wide range of plants, contributing to the ornamental plants agribusiness. Nationwide, the use of native plants has promoted the continued expansion of this market, as a result of the beauty, exoticism, postharvest quality and longevity of flower stalks-essential for the production of flowers, foliage and the like. Different parts of the plant are referred to as "ornamentals," from flowers and orchid inflorescences to bracts, which are popularly called flowers, such as those of *Heliconia* L. and ornamental ginger. Leaves (such as palm leaves), fruits (such as ornamental pineapple or achiote) and even stems (as is the case of *Costus* L.) are also used in floral arrangements (Dias, 2016).

Important advances in the development of Botany occurred in the seventeenth century, supported by Brazilian and European monarchs and naturalists, among whom Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius stands out. His research expeditions produced extraordinary scientific and artistic contributions. Martius authored one of the most important botanical works in the world, the *Flora Brasiliensis* (Salatino and Buckeridge, 2016). Since then, identification of native species is based on the knowledge of local flora. Information on native species diversity contributes not only to physiological studies and micropropagation but also to the development of conservation strategies and the self-sufficiency of the Brazilian ornamental sector in cultivar and seedling production. Note that self-sufficiency is intended to increase competitiveness and generate new cultivar options for the ornamental market and is not related to the restriction of seedling importation into the country.

In Brazil, approximately 33,000 angiosperm species were described in the last decade, in addition to many species of other taxonomic groups. This number is continuously increasing: botanists describe on average 250 new species per year in scientific journals (Forzza, 2016). Despite the high floristic richness of the country, the flora of some areas (mainly in the North and Northeast regions of the country) are still underexplored, and many native species with ornamental potential have yet to be discovered and studied. Urban tree planting is necessary to promote environmental coexistence; the lack of trees can be harmful to public health, increasing thermal sensation and decreasing the quality of life. However, despite our great variety of native tree species, only a few number are used for urban greening. So let us change the atmosphere, bringing more plants into our lives.

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