

BARCELONA'S NEW BOTANICAL GARDEN



HERBARIUM. LEGACY OF THE SALVADOR FAMILY

THE BOTANICAL GARDEN IS A MUSEUM IN WHICH THE OBJECTS ON DISPLAY ARE ALIVE, DOCUMENTED AND IDENTIFIED. ONE OF THE MUSEUM'S BASIC TASKS IS TO INFORM. THIS IT DOES WITH THE HELP OF COMPUTERIZED RECORDS AND DIGITALIZED MAPS.

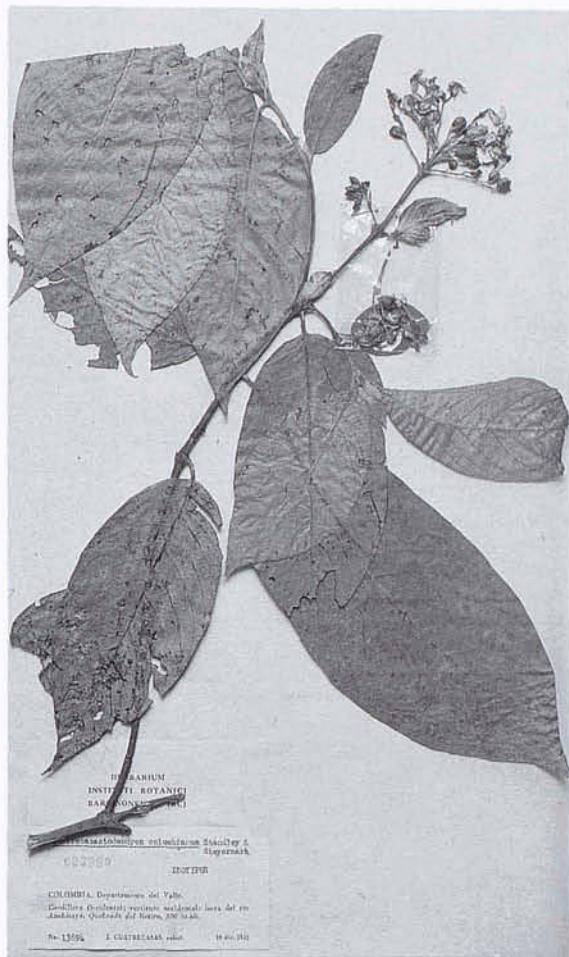
JOSEP M. MONTSERRAT DIRECTOR, BOTANICAL GARDEN OF BARCELONA

Barcelona is today facing a challenge going back 78 years: the construction of a botanical garden on Montjuïc, a hill rising 173 metres beside the sea, one of the city's finest amenities. The idea is an old one, but the project is new. The different historical events our country has been through during this century have denied the city the enjoyment of a permanent botanical

garden and it is only in the last ten years that the opportunity has arisen to tie up previous efforts in a new institution planned in 1916.

Gardens had been planted out in the grounds of the Capuchin convent of the Plaça Reial at the end of the sixteenth century, and later in the grounds of Sant Pau, at the end of the eighteenth century. But it was not until 1930 that the

botanical garden that has survived until today was planted next to the Palau Nacional. The Botanical Institute of Barcelona, heir to the Department of Botany of the Museum of Natural Sciences, is the institution responsible for maintaining it. The commitment to construct a botanical garden on Montjuïc is a result of an agreement between the conservatives of the Lliga and the repub-



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licans, in 1916. The outline plan was submitted the following year by Arturo Caballero, director of botany and a lecturer at the university, and Josep Maluquer, who headed the group of naturalists behind the project. This line of work, which was aborted soon after its conception, is the one we are continuing today.

The installation of the new Botanical Garden on the northern slope of Montjuïc completes the cultural facilities and development planned for this area, at the same time as it provides a single home for the Institute and the Garden. Since 1989, work has been continuing steadily on the project drawn up by the architects Josep Lluís Canosa i Magret and Carles Ferrater i Lambarri, the landscape architect Bet Figueras i Ponsa, the horticulturalist Artur Bossy i Lluch and the botanist Joan Pedrola i Mont-

fort. This project is a result of the contest held by the Municipal Institute for Urban Promotion and the Department of Culture of Barcelona City Council.

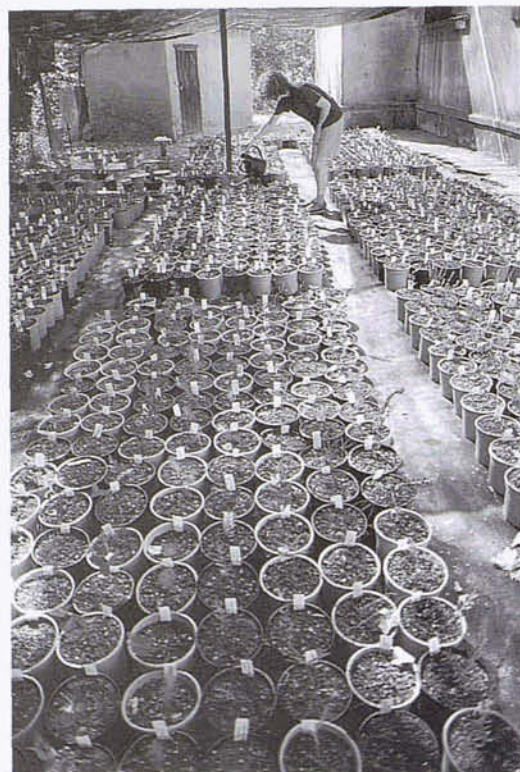
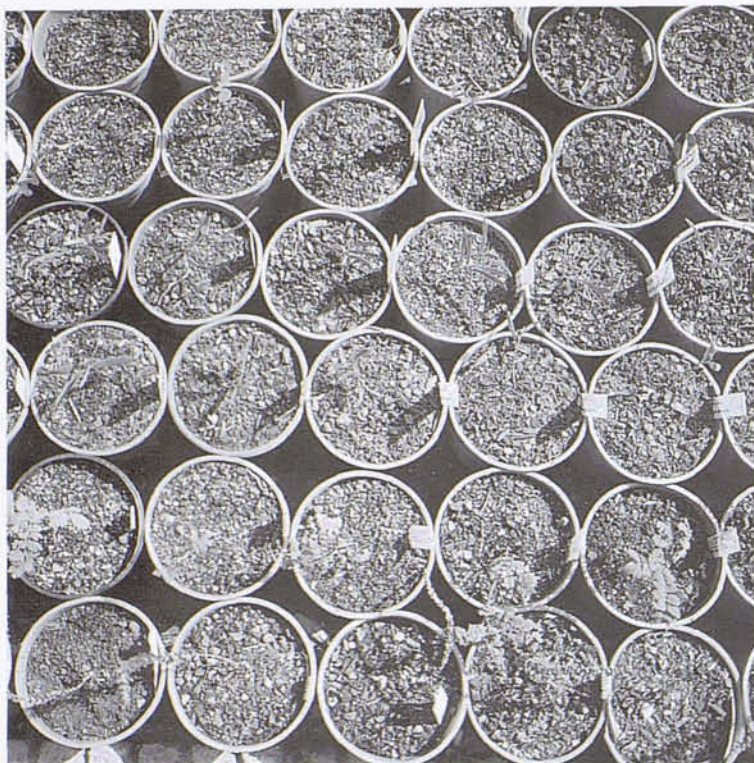
Halfway between the castle on the top of Montjuïc and the Olympic Stadium, the site covers an area of fifteen hectares 150 metres above sea level, with a difference in height between the highest and the lowest points of more than 50 metres. It forms a large amphitheatre facing south-west and open towards the River Llobregat. The project consists of a triangular network of small plots as the basic structure, allowing a range of orientations with the minimum of earth movements. It also allows the creation of microclimates so that groups of plants can be arranged taking into account their ecological requirements. This is important because the plants are distributed according to their

place of origin and are grouped by ecological affinities.

A Mediterranean Project

This scientific and leisure institution, open to all in its mission to serve, has one very important feature, which is its Mediterraneanness. Over the years, there have been different criteria for the ordering of botanical gardens and what is evident is that no one centre has the capacity to house plants from all over the world. The Mediterranean region offers more opportunities than any other to study the changes in flora and vegetation as a result of continued human action.

The new Botanical Garden contains the most representative species from the five parts of the world with a Mediterranean climate: the Mediterranean Basin (which includes Southern Europe, North



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Africa and the Asian Near East), Western California, Central Chile, the Southern tip of Africa and part of Southern Australia. It is extremely interesting to compare this flora with that of Southern China and Southern Japan, which are situated at the same geographical latitude but have different climates. Unfortunately, the space available allows only a limited comparison.

The idea behind the project is to show how, after millions of years of evolution in the same Mediterranean conditions, species from widely differing flora present considerable similarities as a result of adaptation to a similar climate.

The Botanical Garden is a museum in which the objects on display are alive, documented and identified. One of the museum's basic tasks is to inform. The information available will be quickly,

clearly and intelligibly accessible to everyone via computerized records and digitalized maps.

There will also be a place for buildings in the new Garden, at the main entrance beside the Stadium and at the top. They will house the herbarium, the library, the research centre and laboratories, the Salvador Museum, the auditorium, the exhibition hall, the information centre, the nurseries, the cold-houses, the greenhouses, the administration building and the service area.

Public Support

As we approach the end of the century, there are great challenges facing the survival of the human race. These include the need to maintain the Earth's biological diversity and the need for

greater awareness in questions of ecology and the environment. The Botanical Garden's scientific research and educational work is essential.

To achieve this, its greatest asset is the public. The Botanical Garden of Barcelona has secured the backing of a Support Committee, a Friends' Association and 300 volunteers, a civic platform which enthusiastically and disinterestedly carries the institution's voice where it had never reached before.

This civic movement which has grown up around us almost spontaneously in recent times is a constant source of enrichment, a channel for dialogue between the Botanical Garden and the society. It is also a force that drives us on towards our principal objective: the full realisation of the new Botanical Garden. ■