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What's growing on  
at the Garden!

## MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN PUBLISHES FIRST CATALOGUE OF PLANTS OF THE SOUTHERN CONE

*Catalogue can assist scientists in monitoring effects of global warming*

(ST. LOUIS): The **Missouri Botanical Garden Press (MBG Press)** has published the **first** comprehensive database of the species of vascular plants for the Southern Cone region, the southernmost areas of South America. *Catálogo de las Plantas Vasculares del Cono Sur (Catalogue of the Plants of the Southern Cone)* is a taxonomic checklist of the plants of Argentina, southern Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. This database is essentially a dictionary to the names of all the plants in the region, which amounts to **17,697 species**, about the same number that occur in the United States, a much larger region. The comprehensive catalogue is a taxonomic landmark, without modern, published precedence; it's the first time that such an international list has been assembled.

The *Catalogue* is presented in three volumes, which are organized alphabetically by family, genera, and species, and documented with bibliographic citations and information on their distribution, habit, native or introduced status, elevation, and synonymy. Scientists will now have a guide for applying the currently accepted names when identifying a plant for scientific investigation. At least one voucher (dried plant specimen) supports each of the names mentioned in the catalogue.

Because the *Catalogue* lists the geographic locations for all 17,697 plants, scientists can use it as a guide to monitor the changes in the distribution of individual plant species that will occur as a result of habitat destruction, overharvesting, or global warming.

“Particularly at risk are plants with relatively limited areas of distribution, since their habitat may simply disappear in the future,” said Dr. Peter Raven, president of the Missouri Botanical

(over)

### **ADD ONE: Catálogo...Cono Sur**

Garden. “In view of this problem, the catalog provides important information to serve the purpose of conserving the unique plants of the area, approximately half of them found nowhere else in the world.”

Any scientific investigation of plants or animals depends on the use of general agreed names, which makes it possible to communicate accurately about the organisms being considered. If, for example, the molecular properties or other features of specific kinds of plants are to be investigated, a firm scientific classification of the species being investigated is necessary first.

This important project was enhanced by the Missouri Botanical Garden’s strong partnership with the Instituto de Botánica Darwinion in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Its director, Dr. Fernando Zuloaga, was the principal/lead editor of the eight-year project and emphasizes the importance of the catalog in preserving the plant species of the Cono Sur region.

“It’s simply not possible to preserve, what we don’t know,” said Zuloaga. “Now more rational conservation priorities can be set for the region, selected areas can be preserved and enhanced, and plants in special danger of becoming extinct in nature can be brought into cultivation in botanical gardens or seed banks.”

The *Catologue* is the result of the work of over a hundred botanists representing institutions from throughout the Americas and elsewhere in botanical centers worldwide. The individual treatments were subjected to expert review and refinement before the volumes were published. Fernando Zuloaga believes a project of such continent-wide magnitude could not have been accomplished without the successful collaboration among scientists in so many different countries.

“It should be considered as a model for similar projects in other regions of the world, encouraging, beyond political boundaries, the international cooperation of the scientific community, in order to analyze in full the natural environment,” said Zuloaga.

For more information on the *Catálogo de las Plantas Vasculares del Cono Sur* and the Missouri Botanical Garden’s science and conversation work, visit [www.mobot.org/mobot/research](http://www.mobot.org/mobot/research).

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**NOTE: A digital color image is available by request. Download media materials at [www.mobot.org/press](http://www.mobot.org/press).**

The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 149 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display.

### **About MBG Press**

Missouri Botanical Garden Press is part of the Science and Conservation Division of the Missouri Botanical Garden. It plays a key role in the Garden's mission to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment. Through its quarterly journals the *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden* and *Novon*, floras, and other scientific books, including the series *Monographs in Systematic Botany from the Missouri Botanical Garden*, MBG Press provides an important outlet for the dissemination of botanical research. Books and journals can be ordered directly through the MBG Press website, <http://www.mbgpress.info/>.