



Hans Nooteboom 80 years

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Hans Nooteboom (second from left) in FairyLake Botanical Garden, during the 5th symposium on Asian Pteridology and Garden show, Shenzhen, 2010. Photo by Cheng-Wei Chen.

Hans Peter Nooteboom was born on 2 July 1934, and is thus celebrating his 80th birthday this year. That coincides with the 55th anniversary of his active and very productive research career as plant taxonomist in Leiden. A good reason to mark this with a laudatory minibiography in *Blumea*, a journal of which he was an editor for so many years.

Born in Waingapoe, Sumba, Indonesia, Hans became acquainted with the Malesian flora at a very early age, although he and his family already repatriated to The Netherlands in 1939. Tropical plants have held his love and scientific interest ever

since. Following highschool in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, he studied Biology at Leiden University with MSc research projects on the olfactory orientation in isopods, taxonomy of Malesian *Papilionaceae*, and chemotaxonomy and leaf anatomy of the *Simaroubaceae* – a ragbag family at that time in the pre-APG days. C.C.G.J. van Steenis and R. Hegnauer were his formative botanical supervisors. This broad MSc programme would serve Hans well in his later highly varied research career. After a six years stint as highschool teacher of Biology, Hans re-entered academia for his PhD project on Old World *Symplocaceae*. He defended his thesis in 1975. As was the custom in those years, PhD research was carried out in the framework of a tenured position at the university, in Hans's case as staff member in Professor Hegnauer's Laboratory of Experimental

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Plant Systematics. Apart from his research duties, he had a heavy teaching load, which he enthusiastically embraced. The student field trips under his guidance to the south of The Netherlands even acquired some notoriety – albeit in the positive sense – for the large quantities of ‘Elsje’ (a local strong and bitter liqueur flavoured with *Artemisia*) that were imbibed in the evening hours after a day of plant hunting. In 1976 Hans moved to the nearby and closely cooperating Rijksherbarium, where he filled the vacancy left after the retirement of R.C. Bakhuizen van den Brink. His first chore would be to complete the Flora Malesiana revision of *Cyperaceae*, left unfinished by the late Dr. J.H. Kern – the speed and efficacy with which he completed the revision of the species-rich genus *Carex* inspired admiration all-round. It heralded a pattern of exemplary flora treatments and (semi)-monographic precursors of other plant groups: *Magnoliaceae* (left unfinished by J.E. Dandy of the British Museum), *Linaceae* s.l., the fern family *Davalliaceae* and substantial parts of *Polypodiaceae*. Primarily these taxonomic studies were aimed to produce Flora Malesiana monographs, but sensibly Hans also took up the flora treatments of these families for the Floras of Thailand, Sri Lanka, China and in some cases also of New Caledonia. Like other great taxonomists before him, he would revisit his pet families from time to time, enthusiastically contributing to the debate on their phylogenetic classification and speciation biology and greedily absorbing new information from DNA analyses and other multidisciplinary branches of comparative plant biology. His own contributions, invariably based on a strictly alpha-taxonomic approach carried out with a broad Steenisian species concept, have included a number of cases where, gratifyingly, his initial judgments about specific or generic delimitation have been vindicated by later studies. Thus, he proposed circumscriptions for the genera *Leptochilus* (*Polypodiaceae*) and *Davallia* (*Davalliaceae*) before molecular studies confirmed the unity of these groups, and he happily lumped some 50-odd recognized species under *Davallia repens*, well ahead of molecular studies that demonstrate the intricate structure of this mainly apomictic complex (this issue). His broad generic concept in *Magnoliaceae*, initially shocking to his peers, is another example where DNA analysis has proved him right.

Hans is passionate about the core duty of institutions like the Rijksherbarium (which in 1999 morphed into the National Herbarium of the Netherlands and more recently into the Botany section of Naturalis Biodiversity Center) to pursue sound alpha taxonomy as the only basis to contribute effectively to the Catalogue and the Tree of Life, not only for the sake of science, but also to underpin conservation efforts, especially to save the species-rich tropical rain forest.

Where many other alpha taxonomists were slow to use the blessings of information technology, Hans was an early and keen user of computerized tools. As editor of Flora Malesiana

(since 1999) it was his mission to produce interactive identification keys in DELTA on CD-ROM for each species-rich family treatment he edited, thereby rendering a great service to both the authors and user-community of the Flora. Hans also provided editorial services to Blumea, and for a number of years he edited and contributed to the Nature Conservation columns of the Flora Malesiana Bulletin.

Although a herbarium taxonomist in his daily routine, Hans found his botanical inspiration in the field. On numerous expeditions, many small, some quite big, to destinations like Ambon, the Andaman Islands, Aru, Kalimantan (several times), Sumatra, Sabah, Sarawak, Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, Pakistan, China, The Philippines, etc. he amassed impressive herbarium collections, often including wood samples and pickled materials.

Over the years he thus witnessed the dramatic and rapid loss of the tropical forests, and did his best to do something about it. Many were Hans's extramural activities in the service of conservation. As member of IUCN and CITES Committees and several NGOs he was a vocal advocate for bans on the import of tropical hardwoods and of indiscriminate logging of natural forests. In the 80s of the last century he was one of the initiators and advisors of the Tropenbos Programme – a multidisciplinary programme for conservation and sustainable use of tropical forests, still going strong in the three main tropical regions of the world.

Life as a very productive plant taxonomist and editor has not turned Hans into a botanical nerd. He avails himself of every opportunity – invitations, conferences – to spend a few days in the field or in botanical gardens. He is always happy to share his knowledge with his by now invariably younger colleagues, and is an almost infallible guide when it comes to locating a lunchtime or pre-dinner beer. With Hans as participant in a post-symposium field trip, one has never to go thirsty.

At home, together with his partner Heleen he enjoys a full social life, where the care of his fine wine cellar and entertaining friends and colleagues at their hospitable home compete with his hobbies as award winning sailor in traditional Friesian sailing boats and keen traveler to destinations with great natural and cultural beauty. We wish them all the best in the years to come.

Eponymy

Bridelia nooteboomii Chakrab., J. Econ. Taxon. Bot. 5 (1984). 949. *Euphorbiaceae*.

Cinnamomum nooteboomii Kosterm., Reinwardtia 10, 5 (1988). 446. *Lauraceae*.

Elaeocarpus nooteboomii Coode, Kew Bull. 53 (1998) 95. *Elaeocarpaceae*.

Magnolia × *nooteboomiana* Geerinck, Taxonomania 34 (2013) 6. *Magnoliaceae*.