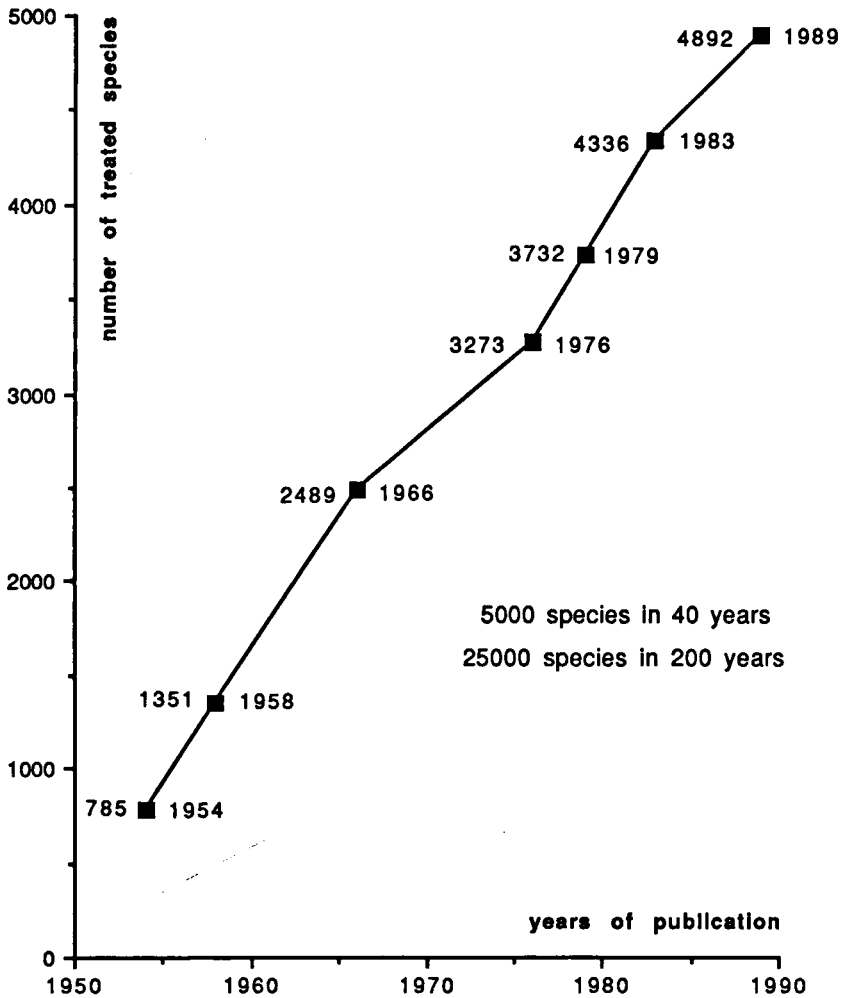


Growth of Flora Malésiana (seed plants only)  
in numbers of treated species.  
Graph is cumulative.



## INTRODUCTION

When Flora Malesiana began, officially in 1950, its aim was to produce a comprehensive survey of an estimated 25,000 plant species in a period of a few decades. On the one hand the Flora had to be concise, on the other hand it had to be "a replacing encyclopedia" for all previously published knowledge. The approach was generally called 'semi-monographic', indicating that a certain degree of 'completeness' was to be realized in the treatments. Even in 1960, ten years later, the founder, Professor van Steenis wrote in an official report that the period necessary for completion would be 30 years (from 1960 onwards) and that the total size would be equivalent to 20 volumes like volumes I, 4 and I, 5 that had appeared in the first decade. Had Professor van Steenis considered more carefully the actual progress, he would have found that the true figures were another 19 decades in order to complete over 35 volumes! The graph on the preceding page shows the growth of the Flora expressed in numbers of species treated per volume. It is surprising that the original rate has not significantly slowed! For a somewhat more elaborate contemplation on these data and background concepts, see the contribution by Geesink in the Flora Malesiana Symposium Proceedings Volume 'The Plant Diversity of Malesia'.

We are now 40 years later with not yet 20% of the Flora (Phanerogams only) completed and the contents of the first volumes outdated to various degrees. This problem was the subject of a 2-day workshop organized immediately after the Flora Malesiana Symposium held in Leiden from 21–25 August 1989. The discussion papers were given to all participants prior to the workshop.

On Saturday 26 August, the participants of the workshop met in the large lecture room of the Rijksherbarium. A plenary session was organized by D.E. Boufford, J.S. Burley, and P.F. Stevens. Their paper, 'Resources for inventorying plant resources in the Southeast Asian tropics' was discussed. The organizers started proposing two conclusions, and from the discussions a third one emerged. The report of the discussion is added here under a slightly modified title. The original discussion paper is not published here because the organizers had it already widely distributed in the relevant institutions.

On Monday morning the sessions continued with a short plenary session in which the authors of the remaining discussion papers presented a summary of their major topics. In-depth discussions were held in small groups (around 12 participants per group), leading to the proposed recommendations. During the evening hours these recommendations were typed out. On Tuesday morning they were duplicated and distributed for all participants to read. Late in the morning the final plenary session began, and concluded in the afternoon. The major themes were discussed and all recommendations were voted on. The major result of this meeting was a strong preference (over 40 for and only 5 against) to a more concise format reducing the execution time to a *realistic* 50 years instead of 160. This can only be performed when the project becomes

a well-organized, truly international undertaking, with more collaboration and more financial resources, but also with a pragmatic approach for the families still to be treated. The current 'semi-monographic' approach is to be abandoned.

While the recommendation for a more concise format has also been accepted by the majority of the Flora Malesiana staff at Leiden, some, from Leiden as well as from abroad, have serious objections. A subsequent proposal by Dr. Sy Sohmer – that an executive staff be appointed to direct and produce Flora Malesiana – also has not been adopted as yet. It is to be hoped that, with the strong international support from this workshop, further positive moves will be made with the goal of completing this major project within a reasonable period.

The discussion papers as printed in this supplementary issue are slightly amended versions of the original ones discussed in the Workshop sessions.

The conclusions will have to be put into practice now and a draft Programme of Action has already been circulated. In this Programme it is suggested that the existing Dutch foundation is broadened into an international body with an advisory Council and a Board, both of international composition.

The pragmatic approach will be explicit in the new 'Directions for Authors' that will be printed in September 1990, but written directions will not be sufficient. The steering of authors onto that road will be the continuing responsibility of editors and Advisory Council. If the financial resources permit the appointment of a liaison officer to keep up the contacts with authors and collaborating institutes, one of his/her main tasks will also be the prevention of hyperperfection, one of the causes of taxonomic delay.

The third and most important, actually the decisive factor that can reduce the execution time while maintaining an adequate scientific standard, is the enlargement of the working force. During the workshop it was more or less taken for granted that more finances and more contributors can be found. The necessary increase of both, however, is not self-evident. Both the responsibility and the initiative of the internationalized Board will be to find more funds, while attracting the contributors will be one of the jobs of the Advisory Council and of the liaison officer.

During the summer of 1990 an integrated automated database system was conceived in Leiden in cooperation with several sister institutions, in order to facilitate data handling. Linked files containing accepted names, synonyms, geographical localities and characters for identification and taxon diagnoses will become the future basis for a more flexible output, one of which will be the printed pages of Flora Malesiana.

Later in 1990 also an updated review will be published of the situation regarding authors and family treatments.

Canberra, 6 August 1990

Leiden, 25 July 1990

A.S. George  
Chairman  
plenary discussion

C. Kalkman  
Chairman  
Foundation Flora Malesiana

R. Geesink  
Organiser Workshop