



This very special issue is dedicated to Prof. Dr. Vladimir Stevanović from the Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade. It celebrates his 70th birthday and at the same time commemorates more than 45 years of his scientific research on the Balkan Peninsula. I am truly honoured to be its guest editor. Our 42 contributors – many of whom I count as friends – come from 14 different countries, and they each have their own interests and ideas dealing with a wide range of topics in the fields of plant taxonomy and phytogeography. My job is to ensure that their contributions, and the friendship and enthusiasm behind them, will be enjoyed and appreciated by the person they honour. I am doing this with the support of the *Botanica Serbica* editorial staff.

When it comes to memorable personalities who retire from their field, farewells are very difficult, as their absence is sometimes felt even more strongly than their presence. That is because we then realise that everything we consider as permanent, is not quite so.

Professor Stevanović is no longer daily at the Institute, but his thoughts and ideas prevail and continue to inspire those who have known him. He has a reputation for encouraging young botanists at the start of their careers. He championed the role of women in science and many of his masters and doctoral students have graduated and proved worthy of his trust. He is immensely proud of them. The department he organised and ran for so many years is very fortunate to have some of these young scientists as permanent staff members. This situation allows them to push ahead, do excellent work, and take initiatives in encouraging students to go into botany and plant ecology, thus continuing the tradition of the geobotanical school he founded.

Professor Stevanović remains an eminent and much-respected scientist both at home and abroad. He has not left the table, he has not gone. We should instead reflect on the words of Leonard Cohen:

“There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in”.

In his retirement, Professor Stevanović will continue to pursue his many active research interests. They include phytogeographical investigations on floristic elements of the central and western Balkans and the continuation of *Flora of Serbia*, now in its third volume. He is the guiding light for many of his friends, associates, collaborators, and students. That light can shine even brighter — and I hope it continues to shine. We would like to thank him for all he has done for science, congratulate him on everything he has achieved, and affectionately wish him well. Following his maxim, we believe that nothing has failed if we have sincerely tried our best.

Due to the unexpected and enthusiastic deluge of contributions, the manuscripts received will be published in two issues — 41(2) and 42(1). By way of acknowledgement, I would like to express my gratitude to the reviewers for giving of their time to review the manuscripts submitted. I am especially grateful to Branka Stevanović and Maja Lazarević for their devoted collaboration.

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