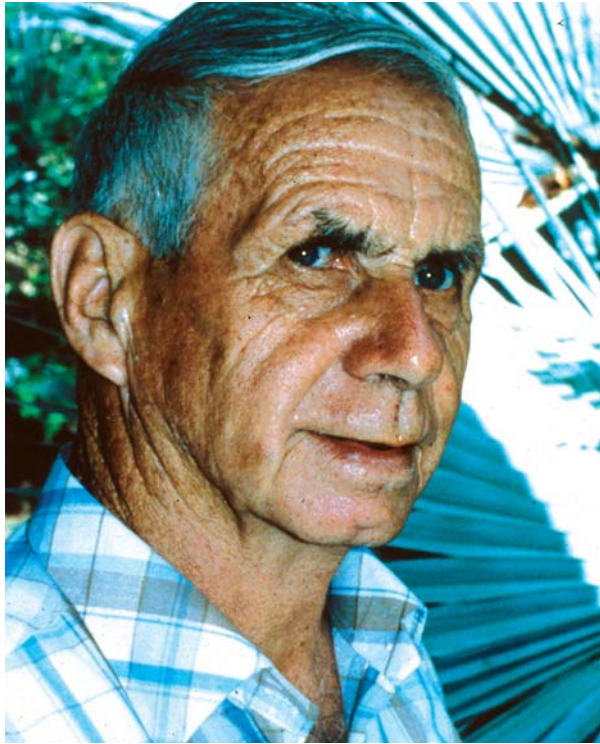


OBITUARY

AUGUST BRAUN ALLENSPACH (1921–2003)



August Braun (Photo: Bruno Manara).

To describe the work and the life of August Braun is not an easy job; it is probably as difficult as describing his complex and often cryptic personality. Those who knew and appreciated him were from the beginning highly impressed by his immense professional capacity and his great love for Venezuela and its flora. From his arrival in Venezuela in 1951 he was keenly interested in the tropical vegetation and particularly by the palms, which at that time were rather poorly known. August felt a special fascination for the beauty of the native palm species and he carried out countless studies on germination and cultivation, all of them with the purpose of promoting their cultivation among gardeners, botanical gardens and private collectors.

Today the work of August Braun can be visually appreciated through the current magnificence of the Caracas Botanical Garden, one of the most diverse and best planned gardens in South America. The palm collection alone contains more than 200 species from all over the world. His countless field trips and the cultivation of ever more valuable palms covered a span of almost 40 years; however, this did not hinder the development of a prolific scientific output that included up to 12 books, all of them beautifully illustrated, and 12 articles in botanical journals. Thus, his background as gardener was never a limitation for the crucial influence of his studies on the current ecological, morphological and taxonomic knowledge of Venezuelan palms. A short introduction to the impressive life and work of August was published in 1999 in *Acta Botanica Venezuelica* (22: 1–44).

The love that he always felt for Venezuela and its flora can be only described with his own words "Venezuela is the country that I could never leave, for more than a half century it offered to me all possibilities to be happy. Switzerland was my first homeland, the one that gave me my educational basis; Venezuela is my second homeland, the one that gave me all for my professional and personal development." His friends and pupils regret the death of August and paid homage during the burial of his ashes in the fields of the Caracas Botanical Garden, his home and definitively favorite place on this planet.

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