



# The IAS Newsletter

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## The European Aroid Community New Interest in the Age of Social Media

Thomas B. Croat, P. A. Schulze Curator

[Missouri Botanical Garden](#)

### Traveling to Germany

On the 5th of September 2019 I flew to Germany on the invitation of [Alex Portilla](#) of [Ecuagenera](#). Alex was planning an aroid sales event at the [Röllke Orchideen](#), a greenhouse complex in Schloss Holte-Stukenbrock and wanted me to present information on Araceae to the participants at his sale. Alex is the company's representative in Europe and had received good responses from people all over northern Europe and thought that it would be good to solidify relationships with a number of new potential members for the International Aroid Society. I was eager to help by meeting these new European aroid enthusiasts, talk about aroids and try to find some new young members for the IAS.

Things did not go well from the outset with my flight to Stockholm leaving 3 hours late out of Washington Dulles Airport. When I arrived in Copenhagen at 10:00 AM the next day on Friday, I learned that there was a baggage handler's strike and that my now rescheduled connecting flight to Hannover was likely to not leave. I spent the next 11 hours going from gate to gate trying to find a way to leave Copenhagen. I had been getting calls from Alex during the day, so he was aware of the situation. Finally at about 9:30 PM, with little hope that I was going to be able to leave on any flight to Hanover, Alex suggested that I might come by train, stating here was a train leaving the Copenhagen main station from Hamburg later that night. I went to the airport Danish Rail Line station and caught a commuter train to the main station. Upon arrival, I found the departure stairs unusually steep and slipped. My bag fell forward. It was not fully zipped so I stooped to gather the contents. I had left my brief case sitting on the door jamb as this was happening. I was immediately engaged in conversation with people who stopped to help. When I looked up, I noticed that the train had taken off with my bag still aboard.

About 2:00 AM we reached the German border and the crew switched. The German conductor who came aboard allowed me to pay with a credit card for the remaining portion of my trip to Hannover for 93 Euros. My train arrived in Hamburg at 4:30 AM and some young ladies helped me find the right concourse for Hannover. This leg of my journey departed at 6:00 AM and the train was a "schnellzug" really covering the 157 kilometers (98 miles) to

Hannover very quickly. Most of the journey was through flat country with open fields and small towns.

All morning after I left Hamburg, I was trying to contact Alex by telephone but was getting a message that the number was wrong. I could see that he, too, was trying to contact me to no avail because my phone was not ringing or buzzing. After I had a cup of coffee, I sat in the Hannover Hauptbahnhof wondering how I would ever make contact with Alex. There were no internet cafes and I no longer had a computer even if they had Wi-Fi. After a couple of hours, I realized that I might as well go find a hotel since I had not slept for several days and I figured that I would have to just remain until Monday when my plane departed for Copenhagen. I had moved to the upper level of the train station near the front door, the only place where there were any seats. Sitting next to a young man clicking away on his cell phone, I wondered if perhaps he could figure out why my phone would not work. He told me that the number looked appropriate and tried the number himself. Thankfully, it worked and Alex Portilla answered. Finally we were in contact. My wife had arranged for my phone to work in Germany but had apparently not included an end of service date. It was consequently working only on the day I had arrived. Alex said that they would send a car for me and that they would arrive in about an hour. Alex had planned an aroid sales event and my presentations were advertised on the [Röllke Orchideen website](#). Alex was authorized to use their facilities to display and sell his aroids.



## Meeting with European Aroiders

The Röllke family headed by **Lutz** and **Conny Röllke** has been in the orchid business for many years. They are good friends of Alex. Conny Röllke arrived with Alex's 12-year-old son, **Ricardo** to pick me up. We headed SW, out of Hannover for the



Thijmen van Gelderen, Tom Croat, Robin Kamphorst, Myrthe Sadée, Alex Portilla, Benjamin Nazareth & Tim Griewe

trip back to Stuckenbrock. The road was an excellent 4-lane road through a hilly region in the State of Lower Saxony not far from the German State of North Rhine Westphalia. Stuckenbrock is formally a part of Schloss Holte-Stuckenbrock, an amalgamation of several small cities. The Röllke home and nursery complex is huge. Their farm is one of many in the region, located between Bielefeld and Paderborn in North Rhine Westphalia, Germany. Lutz Röllke and his wife Conny have been growing orchids since 1980.

At the [Röllke Nursery](#) on Saturday and again on Sunday, I was able to meet and talk about aroids with small groups of European Aroiders. Among those present were: **Mina Persson Husberg** from Sweden, **Tim Griewe** and **Eric Schmidt** from Germany, **Xavier Bonne** from France, **Enimie Van Steenberge** from Belgium as well as six aroid enthusiasts from the Netherlands: **Thijmen van Gelderen**, **Benjamin Nazareth**, **Robin Kamphorst**, **Myrthe Cecile Sadée**, **Thijs Brehm** and **Nina Winkel**.



### Enimie Van Steenberge - Belgium

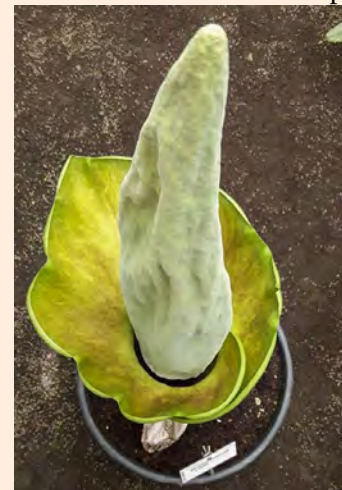


**Enimie Van Steenberge** from Belgium who began accumulating aroids only three years ago was particularly helpful to me, assisting with email addresses. She has a degree in Physics and Astronomy from the University of Ghent where she also studied biology. She volunteers at the Centre for Academic Heritage and Archives at the University of Ghent. Enimie attended the September 2019 Aroid Show and Sale in Miami. She is a very serious student of aroids, having visited the Near East, Central Asia, and Colombia and plans to go to Costa Rica and Mexico.

### Stijn Stappaerts - Belgium



**Stijn Stappaerts** from Belgium is the aroid curator at the [Meise Botanic Garden](#) and is especially interested in *Amorphophallus* but is knowledgeable with other genera. That garden has one of the finest aroid collections in Europe.



### Alex Portilla - Germany



**Alex Portilla** lives in nearby Paderborn with his wife Pauline and Pauline's mother, Anna. He is the European agent for [Ecuagenera](#) which exports orchids and aroids. There is a narrow range of forested hills to the north of Stuck-enbrock which swings south and extends west toward Wuppertal and

Dusseldorf. Paderborn, where Alex and his family lives, lies right where the forested hills swing to the west. Paderborn is a historic city, founded as a bishopric by Charlemagne in 795. I first learned about the sales meeting when I was invited by Alex Portilla to come to Germany to lecture to people whom he expected to come to his aroid sale. It was one of the first major sales conducted by Ecuagenera on the European continent. Alex wanted to make it a success in order to open up more business in Europe. It looks like it was a successful move.

### Daniel Arnould & Dany Hervelle - Belgium



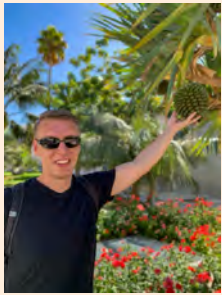
Dany Hervelle

**Daniel Arnould and Dany Hervelle**, from Belgium have been collecting Araceae for many years and are close collaborators with French growers: **Geneviève Ferry** and **David Scherberich**. I believe that it was in Nancy where I first met the two Belgians in person.

Arnould who lives in Rixensart got his start with aroids, like many beginning aroiders, by seeing an interesting plant they admire only to later figure out that there are many more interesting aroids like the one they saw. In Daniel's case, it was an enormous *Epipremnum aureum* (Linden & André) G. S. Bunting that his neighbors were growing. Later he got a cutting of *Philodendron erubescens* K. Koch & Augustin which was growing at the school where he teaches. Still later he received a big *Monstera deliciosa* Liebm. from a restaurant. Soon Daniel was purchasing and collecting plants as well as meeting others with similar interests. This is a common story I hear with aroiders. Dany Hervelle lives in a lovely area in eastern Belgium in a town called Olne not distant from Aachen and Cologne in Germany. Officially he is a customs inspector and is interested especially in *Alocasia*.



## Sebastian Dietzsch - Germany



German aroider, Sebastian Dietzsch began collecting aroids 25 years ago

while in his teens, a collection which has now grown to approximately 350 species. He reports having parted with some to make room for new species and is now attempting to specialize his collection, concentrating on *Philodendron*, *Monstera*, *Thaumatococcus*, *Raphidophora*, *Epipremnum*, *Amydrium*, and *Scindapsus*

## Myrthe Cecile Sadée - Germany

It is interesting that such broad interest in aroids happened so quickly. It was made possible by the advent of social media like Twitter, Pinterest, Facebook, and Snapchat. These allow people in remote places to share pictures and to be able to



make contact with other people with similar interests. Robin, for example learned about the sales meeting in Germany from Myrthe Cecile Sadée. Myrthe works as a safety consultant and lives in Utrecht. She has been collecting aroids for only about two years. An outdoor person, she spends some time each day with her horse and dog in the forest. In her apartment she grows her plants in giant glass-walled cases. Thanks to social media, word apparently spread quickly and the enthusiasm for finding interesting aroids attracted groups of buyers from different parts of Europe.

## Tim Griewe - Germany

Tim Griewe from Munster Germany, though older than Eric



Schmidt is equally excited. He lives in a 75 square meter apartment where his plants are housed during the winter months. In the summer he grows them on a southwest facing balcony with the aid of a sprinkler system and shade cloth. He

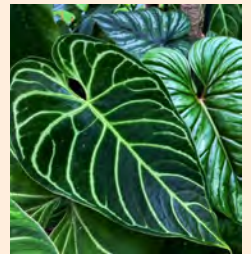
has a beautiful mixture of *Alocasia*, *Colocasia*, *Xanthosoma*, *Monstera* and *Philodendron*, among other things. In the summer his largest growing plants go out to the back yard.

## Eric Schmidt - Germany



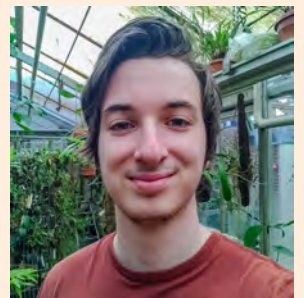
Eric Schmidt lives in Hamburg, Germany. He first became fascinated with aroids at 16 only two years ago when he bought his first plant, *Monstera deliciosa*. He saw Enid Offolter's plants on social media and was sure that he wanted to pursue them further. He bought *Philodendron melanochrysum* and initially had trouble growing it but got good advice from others. Eventually his collection grew so much that he

needed two greenhouses! Now one of our younger aroid growers is by no means the least active.

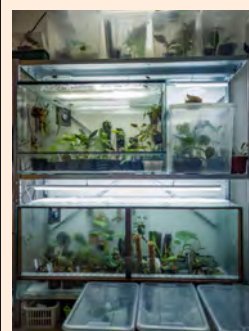


## Nils Weessies - Netherlands

Doing the research for the article I have encountered additional aroiders whom I did not meet in Germany. Nils Weessies is studying Biology at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He is a very serious collector with extensive knowledge of most aroid genera,



especially the genera which produce smaller plants capable of growing in greenhouses which take up less space.



Recently he sent images of what appears to be a new species of *Anthurium* ser. *Multinervia* from Bolivia. We found that we were both growing the same new species of *Spathiphyllum* so we together described the plant. We named it *Spathiphyllum ivanportillae* and the species will be published in the next issue of *Aroideana*.



### Robin Kamphorst - Netherlands



Robin Kamphorst, a Dutch barista and amateur weightlifter is a delightful lady with lots of enthusiasm about her new interest in aroids. She has written, asking how to create better aroid growing conditions. Like most of the aroiders I met in Europe, she is cultivating her aroids inside her house in parts of Europe with long cold nights. There are large obstacles to success. Nevertheless, she, like they, succeeds in growing big and beautiful plants.

### Hans Visser - Netherlands



Hans Visser from Amsterdam University in the Netherlands is an old friend who has been interested in Araceae for decades.

### Thijs Brehm & Nina Winkel - Netherlands



Thijs Brehm & Nina Winkel from Delft, the Netherlands, also came to know and love aroids about two years ago, beginning with *Monstera*s and *Philodendron*s which they had seen and loved for their beautiful foliage and shapes. They could not resist getting some rare aroids for themselves, and especially like *Philodendron verrucosum*. Like others they also run a webshop selling aroids. Last year they acquired *Anthurium regale* from [Ecuagenera](http://Ecuagenera) and it is now getting quite large.

### Benjamin Nazareth - Netherlands



Benjamin Nazareth, an IT specialist who works with the banking industry is a native of India but has moved to Holland to take a job in Utrecht as a Consultant at Tata Consultancy Services. Benjamin has wonderful displays of aroids in his apartment.



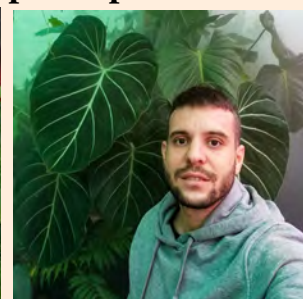
### Monika Kalinowska - Poland

#### Now living in Germany



Monika Kalinowska, originally from Poland, has lived in Berlin for 12 years. She first became interested in aroids in 2016 and in 2017 began her brick and mortar as well as online store called Plant Circle. You might want to visit at [plantcircle.co](http://plantcircle.co). Her flagship store is located on Torstrasse 62m 10119, Berlin. Available material is mostly from Colombia and Ecuador and most recently from Indonesia. She is especially interested in growing patterns and hybrid origins.

### Raul Lopez - Spain



I have learned of only one aroid collector from Spain: **Raul Lopez**. He has been collecting aroids for a long time. I am sure there must be others in a country with such an agreeable climate. Raul has a special interest in *Anthurium*.



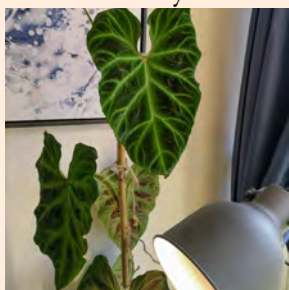


### Robin Deniz - Sweden



Robin Deniz, another Swedish collector from Gothenburg has been building up his collection of plants for about two years and really has beautiful displays in his apartment. Robin works in the Research and Development department of a medical device company headquartered

in Gothenburg. He agrees that it has been through social media that his interest has been promoted. He is especially been interested in *Anthurium* and *Philodendron* and initially wrote to ask about the website [exoticrainforest.com](http://exoticrainforest.com) founded by the late Steve Lucas from Arkansas. To answer his question to anyone else who might be familiar with that site, I can report that it was adopted by the IAS. It is still present there but, unfortunately, with no one continuing to add content. Obviously we need another person like Steve to take on this sort of service for the aroid community.



### Marion Alhonen - Sweden



Marion Alhonen from Hägersten, Sweden near Stockholm has one of the best European private collections of *Anthurium* and *Philodendron*. She recently visited the [Nancy Botanical Garden](http://Nancy Botanical Garden) along with

David Scher-

berich, Nils Weessies and Enimie Van Steenberge. They were guests of Geneviève Ferry at her home in nearby Malzeville (more about that encounter later).



### Mina Husberg - Sweden



Mina Husberg lives with her two beautiful daughters, Molly and Ella in Borås, Sweden where she runs a mail order plant business. She was a former teacher who became enthused with aroids to the extent that she took her chances that she could provide enough in-

come to enjoy the sales business. Since the September aroid sale in Stuckenbrock, Mina has made another road trip there to purchase more plants. She now has a new shop with a beautiful view of the river not far from her apartment.



One thing that is common to most of the European aroiders is that they struggle with space and climatic conditions. The long winter nights and cold winter conditions mean the plants are largely grown indoors. Everyone has their own story about how they keep their plants happy and beautiful during these long winters.

Where I live in the State of Missouri in the USA (38°29'45"N) is much further south than most of Europe. We definitely have a Continental Climate heavily affected by which way the wind is blowing. Our winters range from mild to bitter cold. Normally we have our first heavy frosts in late October or early November. Thus it is not surprising that I grow plants indoors too from late fall to mid spring. In the spring we put a lot of them on the balcony just outside the living room door. We have thousands of in-ground tropical plants too that we don't deal with until after the first heavy freeze happens.



## Established Aroiders



Heinrich Schott



Adolf Engler



N. E. Brown



Luis Sodiro



Karl Koch



Kurt Krause

Despite my discussion here of aroiders that I have met only recently, we can't forget that the first plantmen to work with aroids were European, most important of all was [Heinrich Wilhelm Schott](#) (1794 - 1865). He was a gardener who worked for the Habsburg Empire. Through his working with living plants, became the most knowledgeable person in the world on Araceae. His work was followed by other European botanists around the turn of the Century, namely by Karl Koch (1809 - 1879) in Germany, [Adolf Engler](#)

(1844 - 1930) and [N. E. Brown](#) (1849 - 1934) in England. Also important was the work of Italian aroider [Luigi Sodiro](#) (1836 - 1909) who later adopted the Spanish Luis. He worked in Ecuador and was a close colleague of Engler. The English pushed the study of aroids into both the New World in North and South America and its colonies in the Americas, Africa and Asia, as did the Dutch, Italians, Portuguese and Spanish. Finally it is appropriate to mention the work of [Kurt Krause](#) (1883 - 1963) who, though much younger than Engler, worked closely on many of the aroid revisions, especially with the Philodendroideae.

Presently the continent is rich with many professional and aroid enthusiasts who I have met over the years. The older more established aroiders in Europe are numerous. I will not mention most of the historical personalities except for a few contemporaries because one of the main objectives of this paper is to make you all aware of one another and to attempt to forge bonds between you so that you may all prosper in your own area of interest.

### David Prehler - Austria



In nearby Austria. David Prehler is an avid aroid collector in Vienna. He works in the Pharmaceutical Department at the University of Vienna. Vienna, the home of Heinrich Wilhelm Schott, the Grandfather of Araceae, is important as the epicenter of early work with the family. Many aroids are still growing in the greenhouses at the Schönbrunn Palace at the edge of Vienna. Several important Viennese botanists are involved with aroids ([see next section](#)).

### Guy & Lilian Gusman - Belgium

Belgian Guy and Lilian Gusman and are both specialists with *Arisaema* and have written two books dealing with taxonomy and ecology of this wonderful and widespread aroid genus. I first met them at their home in Brussels when visiting with two French aroiders, Ferry and Scherberich. They cultivate many *Arisaema* species in their yard. Guy holds a Ph.D in physics. Aroids may be his hobby but his accomplishments are many.



### Ladislav Holy - Czech Republic



Ladislav Holy, from Louny, Czech Republic often collaborates with Haager and has many collections from the neotropics. His collections have now all been incorporated with those in Teplice. Together we have found and described a couple of new species.

### Gitte Petersen - Denmark

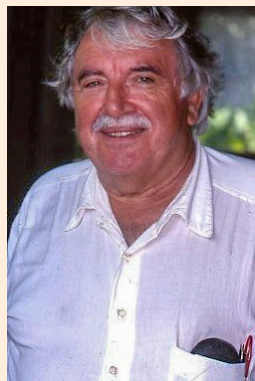


Danish botanist, **Gitte Petersen**, working at the Danish Agricultural University made her mark with a major study of aroid cytology and was a close collaborator with many botanists including Bogner.

### Josef Bogner - Germany



Among the most important and active of modern day aroiders was the late [Josef Bogner](#) (1939 - 2020) whom I am mentioning even though he died recently. This is because of his importance and zeal in the study of aroids. Josef worked at the [Munich Botanical Garden](#) most of his career. He was a self-taught taxonomist who became one of the world's leading aroid specialists. He has been awarded both the [H.W. Schott Award](#) for Excellence in Aroid Taxonomy and the [Bette Waterbury Award](#) for Excellence in Aroid Horticulture, the only person ever to have received both awards. During his career, he developed the world's best collection of aroid genera.



### Jiri Haager (George) - Czech Republic



Jiri (George) Haager, former Director of the Prague Botanical Garden and now Director of the Teplice Botanical Garden in northern Czech Republic worked in Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and many other places collecting plants for the development of the Prague Botanical Garden as well as for Teplice. I first met George during the cold war when I arrived in Prague from Kiev after my Russian friends managed to get me aboard a train without a reservation. (I was hidden in the conductor's private closet). While I was working in a remote herbarium far outside of Prague I received a telephone call. I was shocked because I was unaware that anyone except the Curator even knew I was in Czechoslovakia. It was George who called me saying that he had a collection of aroids and wanted to show it to me. After more than 40 years of isolation from the west I was assuming that it would be nothing of interest. George, however, had been on trips with world famous volcanologists in several countries of the Americas (Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia) and proved to have many new species.

### Stephan Ittenbach - Germany



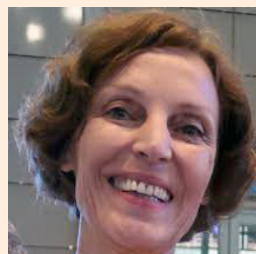
Stephan Ittenbach at the [Bonn Botanical Garden](#), German colleague of Wilbert Hetterscheid, did a similar study with the *Amorphophallus* of Africa.

### Lars Nauheimer - Germany



Another Renner student, German **Lars Nauheimer** began his work with Araceae making a study of epiphytes, especially *Anthurium* in Panama and Ecuador. At Munich he did molecular studies on *Alocasia*. He now lives in Australia and teaches at the James Cook University in Cairns.

### Susanne Renner - Germany



Another prominent German, **Susanne Renner**, Director of the [Munich Botanical Garden](#), is a molecular biologist and one of the leading phylogenists with Araceae. Susanne spent many years on the staff at the University of Missouri in St. Louis where I also serve as an adjunct staff member.



### Nils Köster - Germany



Nils Köster, German botanist, got his Ph.D. from the University of Bonn and now works at the [Berlin Botanical Garden](#). He is a specialist on the phylogeny of *Philodendron* and had lots of field experience in Ecuador. He was the senior professor of Duban Canal who did a phylogeny of the genus *Philodendron*. It is wonderful to have an aroid specialist in this formidable and important aroid collection where Engler completed most of his major work on Araceae including the Das Pflanzenreich series. Köster is officially in charge of the living collections but plays an important role in the herbarium as well. Finally, he is working with me on an aroid florula of the Mache Chindul Mountains in northwestern Ecuador.

### András Terpó - Hungary



András Terpó, from the [Hungarian History Museum](#) in Budapest was a specialist on *Arum*. He presented his work at the Moscow conference in 1992.

### Natalia Cusimano - Italy

One of Renner's students, Natalia Cusimano from Italy did molecular studies entitled "[Relationships within Araceae: Comparison of morphological patterns with molecular phylogenies](#)" which was one of the most comprehensive molecular studies of aroids to date.

### Wilbert Hetterscheid - Netherlands

Wilbert Hetterscheid from the Netherlands is the world's authority on *Amorphophallus* but is also very knowledgeable about *Typhonium* and other tuberous genera as well as in pollination biology of aroids. Formerly he was the Director of the now abandoned Wageningen Botanical Garden which closed in 2009. Since 2010 Wilbert has been the Director of the [Nationaal Bomenmuseum Gimborn](#) (National Tree Museum Gimborn).



### Johannes (Joep) Moonen - Netherlands

Now living in French Guiana



Johannes (Joep) Moonen is a professional photographer who relocated years ago to Suriname, where he headed the zoo in Paramaribo. He later emigrated from Suriname to French Guiana where he and his partner Marike operate a hotel and nature tourism establishment in the country west of Cayenne. Joep spends countless hours in the field. He has become an expert on the Araceae and Bromeliaceae of the Guianas.



### The van der Knapp Family - Netherlands



Mark van der Knaap,  
Marco van Herk,  
Iwan van de Knaap

Though not taxonomists, one group stands out among all others in terms of importance in the field of horticulture, namely [Anthura, Inc.](#), the leading producer of *Anthurium* in cut flower industry and increasingly a leader in the potted plant industry. This company, centered on Bleiswijk, Holland is now a large modern corporation with facilities around the world. The company was founded by Jan van der Knaap in 1938 and was taken over by Nic van der Knaap and his wife Jeanette in 1973. The company is managed by Mark van der Knaap, Marco van Herk and Iwan van der Knaap. Jan van Dyk, Martijn Pepping, Martyn van Swieten have a strong interest in *Anthurium* breeding and have represented Anthura at international conferences. Certainly no group

anywhere in the world comes close to matching the productivity of this company. They have been a strong influence on the taste in plants for decades and as a group we are indebted to them for popularization of aroids.



Nic and Jeanette van der Knaap  
with sons Mark (l) and Iwan (r)  
& Marco van Herk (center)

### Mihaela Antofie - Romania



Mihaela Antofie, worked for many years at the [Institute of Biology at Bucharest University](#) in Romania. She did research with micropropagation of several aroid genera, notably *Syngonium* and *Spathiphyllum* as well as other developmental studies. She is now the

Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture Sciences, Food Industry and Environmental Protection at Sibiu University. In 2005 when I was in Bucharest I spent part of a day going from one university campus to the next in search of Mihaela but to no avail. She later apologized for being so hard to find and we have corresponded frequently ever since.

### Misha (Michael) Serebryanyi - Russia



Misha (Michael) Serebryanyi from the [Moscow Botanical Garden](#) organized the 3-day long IV International Aroid Conference in 1992

which was one of the most well-attended conferences ever. It included a trip east of Moscow to massive swamp where we observed *Calla palustris* in the wild. Misha has interests largely with the Araceae of Vietnam. For a number of years he had his own computer business but has now returned to the botanical garden.

### Matyas Buzgo - Switzerland



Swiss botanist, Matyas Buzgo did his Ph.D. thesis at the Institute of Systematic Botany at the University of Zurich and worked with floral development of the Araceae. He made comparisons with the Alismatales and Acoraceae as well as with odor production in *Lagenandra*. Matyas now works at the Biological Sciences Department in the Louisiana State

University in Shreveport.

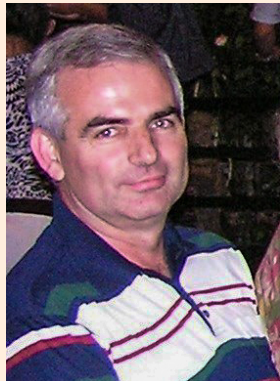
### Marianne Knecht - Switzerland



Marianne Knecht from Switzerland published her biosystematics study of the Araceae of the Ivory Coast and was a participant in the 1st International Aroid Conference at the

[Marie Selby Botanical Gardens](#) (as was the late Croatian aroider, the late Marija Belalov from the University of Zagreb in Croatia, and an expert on Arum). Marija was a native of Split, Croatia but spent many summers working at the University of Neuchatel in Switzerland. I visited her once in Zagreb while she was still working and later in Split after she retired.

### Kerim Alpınar - Turkey



Kerim Alpınar, at the Department of Pharmacy of the University of Istanbul in Turkey has a long-standing interest in aroids, especially from the pharmaceutical point of view. He established the Turkish Aroid Research Group in 2016 with a webpage <http://www.aroidarastirmagrubu.com/> which will soon be translated into English. I visited Kerim and his family on my visit to Turkey in 2005.

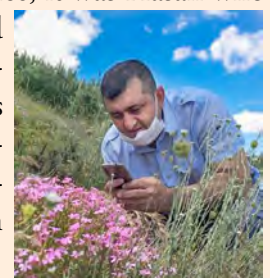
He gave my wife and me a local tour of the city and of the university's botanical garden.

### Hasan Akan - Turkey



Kerim's colleague and former student, Hasan Akan, from Harran University in southern Anatolia, also works with aroids. The group holds annual workshops which are well-attended. At the Nancy Aroid Conference, it was Hasan who proposed

that we meet for our next International Aroid Conference at his University. However, for the following conference the aroid community voted to go to Vietnam instead.



### Vasil V. Zaivy - Ukraine

Vasil V. Zaivy, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine has developed one of the finest private collections in Ukraine.





## Deni Bown - UK

Now living in Spain



Deni Bown, an English botanical horticulturist, writer and photographer, suddenly became one of the leading people of interest in the family with the publication of her book "Aroids – Plants of the Arum Family" in 1988, followed by a second edition in 2000. From 2009 to 2018

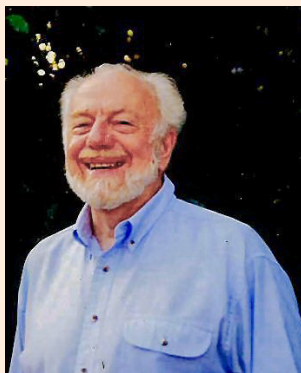
Deni lived in Ibadan, Nigeria where she headed up projects on forest conservation and environmental education. Since leaving Nigeria she has been living in Xàbia on the SE coast of Spain. Deni recently became the Vice President of the newly formed [European Aroid Society](#). She is currently planning a third edition and hoping to find a new publisher.



## Derek Burch - UK

Now living in the US

Derek Burch, who was born in England is another such ex-European who has done a lot for the Aroid Community and has served for many years as the Editor of *Aroideana*. I first met Derek at the [Missouri Botanical Gardens](#) in the late 1960's when we were both on the herbarium staff and while Derek served as temporary



Director of Horticulture. Derek was also a recipient of the



With John Banta at IAS Show & Sale

H.W. Schott Award by the International Aroid Society. Presently Derek has stepped down from the Editorship in favor of Peter Boyce but continues on to be a Member of the Editorial Board.

## Natalia Dneskyvaya - Ukraine

Natalia Dneskyvaya, the aroid grower at the [Kiev Botanical Garden](#) has developed one of the finest collections of Araceae in the former Soviet Union. [Misha Serebryanyi](#) stayed at Natalia's Garden in 1991 when we took a trip there together from Moscow while we were planning for the Moscow International Aroid Conference (held in 1992).



## Peter Boyce - UK

Now living in Malaysia



Peter Boyce, another co-author of the "Genera of Araceae" and a native of Great Britain, is the world's expert on Asian Araceae and lives now in Sarawak on the species-rich island of Borneo. He began his career studying some important elements

of the Mediterranean Araceae, notably a revision of *Biarum*. He and his wife Wong Sin Yeng are the most productive in terms of generating literature including molecular analysis. Borneo is such a hotbed of aroid evolution that the identification of new species seem to never end. The area has the largest number of genera in the world.



## Anna Haigh - UK



Anna Haigh at [Kew Gardens](#) is currently filling the shoes of [Simon Mayo](#) with her work in the herbarium on Araceae. She has done

field work in the West Indies and played a large role in the development of the multi-entry Lucid keys for identification of aroids, acting as the senior author of the *Anthurium* key.





### Simon Mayo - UK



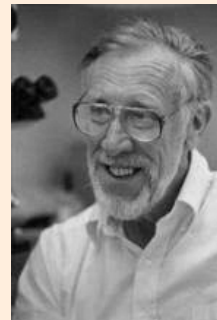
Another of the premier aroiders from Europe is **Simon Mayo** at [Kew](#) who wrote “The Genera of Araceae”, the definitive book on aroids, co-authored with **Bogner** and **Peter Boyce**. He specialized on the floristics of both the Americas and Africa and was one of the first to re-appraise the [Englerian system](#)

of classification. Now officially retired Simon still regularly visits the garden for continued research and to continue his work with his Brazilian colleagues and students.



### Barry Tomlinson - UK

Another Englishman, one now living and working in the U.S. is **Barry Tomlinson** from Harvard University's Harvard Forest campus near Petersham, Massachusetts. He was instrumental in the organization of the 2nd International Aroid Conference at Harvard Forest in Petersham, Massachusetts. Tomlinson, a plant anatomist, published several papers involved with the vascular system in stems of Araceae and worked closely with **James French** on several anatomical topics.



### Alistair Hay - UK

Now living in Australia



**Alistair Hay**, another Brit who moved to Asia began his career in New Guinea and published a treatment of the Aroids of Papua New Guinea and later revised *Cyrtosperma* as well as doing important studies with *Alocasia*. He is the world's authority on the subfamily Lasioideae. After establishing himself as a leading authority on the flora of SE Asia he served a stint as Director of the [Royal Botanic Garden](#) in Sydney. Alistair, now officially Australian, spends part of each year in Colombia where he operates a private botanical gardens which is one of the finest on the South American Continent. He is already establishing himself as an important researcher in the Neotropics.



## Pollen and Pollination Experts

### Eva Gfrerer - Austria

### Danae Laina - Austria



Eva Gfrerer

Two Ph.D. candidates at the University of Salzburg in Austria, as well as **Eva Gfrerer** and **Danae Laina** work on pollination of *Arum maculatum* L. using novel combinations of ecological, chemical-ecological and genomic methods to study local adaptation in floral scents. They also attempt to identify the compounds responsible for pollinator attraction. Their Arum group is headed by their supervisors, **Hans-Peter Comes** (Ph.D. University of Heidelberg), **Anja C. Hörger** (Masters and Ph.D. from LMU in Munich) and **Stefan Dötterl** (Ph.D. from the University of Bayreuth in 2004).

### Corrina Ehn - Austria

### Florian Etl - Austria

Both currently in Costa Rica



Currently at the University of Vienna, students, **Florian Etl** and **Corrina Ehn** are becoming very knowledgeable pollination biologists. Florian's current focus is on *Dieffenbachia*, *Philodendron* and *Syngonium*. Corinna is working with *Anthurium*. Both are working at the [Forest Reserve La Gamba](#) in Costa Rica.





## University of Vienna Pollen Group - Austria



**Michael Hesse**



**Martina Weber**



**Silvia Ulrich**



**H. Halbritter**

Michael Hesse at the University of Vienna is a leading authority on the pollen of Araceae. Working with Hesse on the study of pollen are Martina Weber, Heidemarie Halbritter and Silvia Ulrich. Michael Hesse recently co-authored "[Pollen & Pollination](#)".

## Marc Gibernau - France

Marc Gibernau, now at the [CNRS – University of Corsica](#) and formerly from the University of Toulouse and a frequent resident in French Guiana, is the leader of studies in pollination biology with Araceae. This is a specialized field that has grown dramatically in recent years. I was astonished at the number of pollination biologists who attended the [X International Aroid Conference](#) in Nancy, France in July, 2009.



## Alain Fridlender - France

Alain Fridlender (Université de Provence, Marseilles, France) is working with Araceae in the Mediterranean region. Alain is studying the evolution of Mediterranean aroid genera and is making use of cytology, flow cytometry, floral biology and molecular phylogeny.

## Heiko Hentrich - Germany



Heiko Hentrich, a German pollination biologist and formerly from Ulm University is now working for the Deutsche Homöopathie-Union in Basel, Switzerland. He is active in Mexico and Central America and has sponsored the work of Mexican botanist Pedro Díaz who is working on the pollination biology of *Spathiphyllum*. Heiko gave a lecture at the conference recognizing the 50th year founding of the [University of Panama Herbarium](#) and then participated in field work with a number of Central American botanists, discovering several new species in the process.

## Marion Chartier - France



It was at the University of Corsica that I first met Marion Chartier, a former French student of Marc Gibernau who did her graduate work at the University of Toulouse under the direction of Gibernau and did field work in Reunion and French Guiana. She now works at the University of Vienna where there are other botanists interested in aroid pollination.

## Valentina F. Tarasevich - Russia



Valentina F. Tarasevich at the [Komarov Botanical Institute](#) in Leningrad is a leading authority on pollen of Araceae.

## Gijs Grob - Netherlands



Gijs Grob, from the University of Utrecht studies both pollen and phylogeny of *Amorphophallus*.

### **Marcus Stensmyr - Sweden**

#### **Bill S. Hansson - Sweden**



Two Swedish neuroethologists, **Marcus Stensmyr** and **Bill S. Hansson**, both graduates from Lund University and now working at the [Department of Evolutionary Neuroethology at the Max-Planck-Institute for Chemical Ecology in Jena](#), Germany have conducted investigations into the olfactory deceit attraction of some *Arum* species and *Helicodiceros muscivorus*. Bill Hansson spent much of his career at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences at Alnarp until he was recruited by the Max Planck Institute in Jena where he now serves as Head of the Department of Evolutionary Neuroethology.

### **Isabella Urru - Sweden**

#### **Came from Italy**



Another collaborator is **Isabella Urru**, an Italian graduate from the University of Cagliari who now works at the same institute in Jena and whose work focuses on the pollination systems of *Arum* by combining molecular, chemical and electrophysiological methods. Her general research interest is on pollination systems built on deception, particularly the chemosensory cues involved in this complex plant–insect interaction.

### **Anita Diaz - UK**



**Anita Diaz** from Britain at the University of Bournemouth made her debut with most other aroiders at the 10th International Aroid Conference in Nancy in 2009 where she presented a paper on pollination with aroids. Anita is a conservation ecologist who does her research heathlands, meadows and woods. Her research projects include collaboration with the National Trust and other wildlife conservation organisations. Similarly Anita collaborates with the University of Leon and Pyrenean Institute of Ecology in Spain.

### **Mark Szenteczki - Switzerland**

#### **Came from Canada**



Another active pollination biologist on aroids includes **Mark Szenteczki** (Univ. Neuchâtel, Switzerland) who aims to discover the evolutionary and demographic histories of non-model organisms as well as the molecular bases of local adaptations.

### **Nadir Alvarez - Switzerland**

#### **Came from France**



A European pollination biologists, **Nadir Alvarez**, trained at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland, is now at the [Natural History Museum of Geneva](#).



## **Aroid Growers**

It takes a lot of skill to grow in a single place many aroids from around world, each with their own particular requirements. Some have done this exceedingly well and among the best was the aforementioned [Josef Bogner](#) who at one point had nearly every known genus of Araceae in cultivation at the [Munich Botanical Garden](#).



### Frieda Billiet - Belgium

### Bernard Jadin - Belgium



Frieda Billiet worked for many years as a taxonomist in the living collection at the [Meise Botanic Garden](#) near Brussels and did lots of field work in French Guiana. Long after she retired from her greenhouse position she volunteered to work on the taxonomy of greenhouse plants at the large BR herbarium located in the gardens there. I have visited Frieda several times at her lovely property near Limal where she and her husband **Bernard Jadin** developed astonishing gardens filled with beautiful plants. Frieda is memorialized by lovely *Philodendron billietiae* Croat which she discovered in French Guiana.

### Geneviève Ferry - France

Other gardeners or specialized growers who have to maintain diverse collections include **Geneviève Ferry**, one of the most experienced gardeners at the Nancy Botanical Garden and one of the finest growers of aroids. She was winner of the Bette Waterbury Award in 2012 and may have more field experience than most horticulturists owing to her many trips with me to the Guianas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.



### David Scherberich - France



David Scherberich, Director of Health Science & Collections at the [Lyon Botanical Garden](#) in France is one of the leading generalists with Araceae and an excellent horticulturist (Winner of the [Bette Waterbury Award](#) in 2018 at the [XII International Aroid Conference](#) in Cali). [David's website](#) with beautiful well-determined aroids is a delight and a great source of information. David has lots of field experience and traveled twice with me to Latin America, Colombia and Ecuador and he has visited China and Madagascar.



### Patrick Blanc - France



Another Frenchman, [Patrick Blanc](#) carried out important studies on the growth behavior of the Araceae and these led to more intensive studies by others including the American aroider, **Tom Ray**. Patrick has developed many unique displays of plants using novel green walls (See some examples among the section entitled "Private Collections").



## Aquatic Aroid Specialists

### Niels Jacobsen - Denmark



Niels Jacobsen, from Denmark one of the foremost experts on Araceae in Europe is the leading specialist on *Cryptocoryne* and has probably the world's richest collection of the genus at the University of Copenhagen. Niels has lots of field experience throughout Southeast Asia. Since *Cryptocoryne* are often very small and cryptic and also frequently hybridize much of Jacobsen's work involved probable hybridization

### Jan Bastmeijer - Denmark



One of Jacobsen's closest collaborators is, **Jan Bastmeijer**, another authority on *Cryptocoryne*. Both benefited from the late Dutch botanist, H. C. D de Wit who pioneered studies in aquatic plants.

### Christel Kasselmann - Germany



Christel Kasselmann is a German aroid aquatic plant specialist from the suburbs of Berlin. Professionally she was a sound engineer for German public radio but her real love was aquatic plants. She has written well over 400 articles and 4 books on aquatic plants (the latest entitled Aquarium Plants which is written in English). Even as a young girl she was very interested in aquarium plants and was a close associate of Josef Bogner. She corresponded with him or spoke on the phone virtually every week for more than 40 years. They

worked together on articles in the journal Aqua Planta, an aquarium plant magazine, for about 30 years. When she was only 20 years old she travelled to Tanzania for the first time and has subsequently made over 60 tropical trips just to look for new aquarium plants. She has also described new species and was always particularly interested in the ecology of the plants, taking care to collect soil and water samples to have them examined in order to improve her understanding of how the plants can grow in cultivation. She has always tried to reproduce her collections to pass them on to her friends. In her above mentioned book all cultivated aquarium plants are presented in detail in portraits. The book has a lot written about the ecology of aquatic species (light, substrate, water). Over 80 biotopes in all continents of the world are described with water and soil analyses presented. Now retired, Christel has more time to devote to her aquatic plants. We hope that she will continue to find new and interesting aroids. On a recent trip to Colombia she found an interesting and possibly new species of *Spathiphyllum*. I hope to help her identify it. Her website: [www.christel-kasselmann.de](http://www.christel-kasselmann.de) has more details about her publications.

### Arie de Graaf - Netherlands

Other students of the aquatic plant world include Dutch botanists Arie de Graaf from Wageningen who published a number of studies on *Cryptocoryne* and Wim Crusio, then at the University of Heidelberg, who did a revision of the genus *Anubias* in Africa. Crusio is now behavioral neurogeneticist and a research director with the French National Centre for Scientific Research in Talence, France.

This article will allow many aroiders to become better acquainted and to exchange ideas and plant specimens for the improvement of our knowledge of this wonderful family. It is unfortunate that many of us were not able to meet in Europe as we had planned for the XIII International Aroid Conference to have been held in Munich, Germany, from July 27th to July 30th of 2020. Hopefully, the next conference will still be held in Europe so that many of you will be able to meet and get to know each other better.

Meanwhile I want to make sure that all of you are familiar with the recently founded [European Aroid Society](http://www.aroid.eu) which can be accessed with the following link [www.aroid.eu](http://www.aroid.eu). The

European Aroid Society was brought about principally through the efforts of Nils Weessies from Utrecht in the Netherlands and Enimie van Steenberge from Belgium. My old friends David Scherberich ([Lyon Botanical Garden](http://www.lyonbotanicalgarden.com)) and Deni Bown (Spain) have agreed to serve as the first President and Vice President respectively and Nils Weessies will serve as Treasurer of the organization. Nils and Enimie recently stopped to visit Geneviève Ferry on their way to Lyon and David came up to Nancy to meet them. Their plan was to spend time in Lyon making final plans for raising awareness of the new organization, developing a website and making plans on how the EAS would collaborate with the existing International Aroid Society. I hope that if you have not already done so that you will join forces with other European aroiders to help sponsor research and attention to aroids so that we all might benefit.

There is much to learn about aroids, not only their taxonomy but their growth requirements. Working together we can find the best conditions under which each species will grow, the best soil mixture, the best watering schedule, the proper exposure, atmospheric humidity and temperature for each species. With a free exchange of information brought about by the EAS website you will learn much. Hopefully growers will find and exchange plants to enrich collections. Marketers might find new sources of interesting plants and professionals will benefit from knowing where they can obtain plants for research. I have relied heavily on growers in the aroid community when I need information, a special plant or have a question about a plant I do not know well. A simple email to Aroid-L or the IAS Facebook site often gave me the answer in minutes. I have been doing research with Araceae for more than a half century and have interacted with hundreds of people, all of whom had some interesting plant that they wanted to learn more about. In an average week I get no fewer than 5 messages sent with pictures inquiring about identification. While some I am able to name immediately and others after keying them out, many can't be named because they are new. Many of you who are obtaining material directly from the tropics will have new species in your collections (even though you may not be aware of it) so it is important to maintain all information you might have on your plants and pass



that same information on to purchasers or individuals with whom you trade plants. Any failure in this process means usually a plant that while pretty is useless for scientific purposes. Alternatively any plant of known origin which proves to be new can be used to legally describe the species. The tropics, especially the American tropics are filled with as yet undescribed species. Many of you can assist in the process of learning more about these new aroids. The future is indeed exciting.

Hopefully, this article will spur interest in getting to know other European growers and we can learn from them. I will be assembling contact information for all European aroiders and will happily circulate this information to anyone who wants it. Please let me know of new persons who have a primary interest in studying and growing aroids. You will learn from this paper about people you did not know about and you may wish to contact them. Alternatively anyone who wishes their email addresses deleted from the list please contact me.

Final note : While it was my intent to provide pictures for everyone I mentioned some people were either not capable of being contacted or did not send an image after I requested one. If you are one of these individuals and wish to have your picture included please send a picture. Also, if there are corrections in any of the information presented in the article please inform me. This paper will remain posted on the website of the International Aroid Society website under Digital Newsletters for December, 2020.

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