

For immediate release
August 10, 2006

International Association for Plant Taxonomy Awards Engler Medal in Silver

On August 1, 2006, at the Botany 2006 conference in Chico, California, the International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT) presented its prestigious Engler Medal in Silver to co-authors John T. Mickel and Alan R. Smith for *The Pteridophytes of Mexico*, an authoritative book describing and illustrating all known ferns in Mexico.

The IAPT's Engler Medal in Silver recognizes leading work in plant science. Established in 1990, it is awarded annually to the author(s) of an outstanding publication in the scientific classification of plants. In his presentation of the award, IAPT officer Warren Wagner praised the "magnum opus" of Mickel and Smith's *The Pteridophytes of Mexico*, calling it a "magnificent, monumental, and comprehensive treatment" of one of the largest fern floras in the world. It was judged by the IAPT to be the most outstanding publication in floristic or monographic plant systematics for 2004 and one of the most complete tropical fern floras [listings of all plants of a region] ever written.

Fourth Engler Medal in Silver at The New York Botanical Garden

John Mickel's receipt of the IAPT's Engler Medal in Silver marks the fourth time a scientist at The New York Botanical Garden has been so honored, an exceptional track record for any institution. Earlier honorees were Scott A. Mori (2002), James L. Luteyn (1996), and Rupert C. Barneby (1991).

About *The Pteridophytes of Mexico*

The Pteridophytes of Mexico was published by The New York Botanical Garden Press in June 2004. It is the first attempt at a country-wide fern flora since early in the 20th century, and fills the gap between two other recent major fern floras, those for North America north of Mexico and for Mesoamerica.

The book presents 1008 species and 16 additional varieties and subspecies, each fully illustrated and described. Maps are included for all, so that the reader can see the fern's distribution in Mexico at a glance. Because many species also occur in countries both adjacent to as well as surprisingly distant from Mexico, this book is useful well beyond that country's boundaries. The book is a welcome and useful reference for scientists around the world, as well as for conservationists and gardeners.

The first few pages of the book provide a brief treatment of the geography of Mexico, the history of its fern study, and the relationship of its fern flora to areas north and south of its borders. The bulk of this handsome volume, however, is dedicated to descriptions, full bibliographic citations, geographic distributions, habitat information, key literature citations, and discussions of relationships among ferns. Nearly all species are illustrated by line drawings that are beautifully executed, elegant, detailed, diagnostic, and large enough to be truly useful. The line drawings comprise about one-third of the book.

Forty new species are named in this book. These newly described species attest to the richness, novelty, and poorly studied nature of ferns in Mexico.

The Pteridophytes of Mexico is also the first flora to incorporate phylogenetic information, using modern DNA analysis to help understand relationships among the various species. To aid future studies, the authors have also added critical comments that point out areas where further use of modern techniques of cytology, chemistry, molecular studies, and detailed comparative studies of morphology and spores can be expected to better define species limits, relationships, and ranges.

About the Engler Medal Winners

Authors John T. Mickel, of The New York Botanical Garden, and Alan R. Smith, of the University Herbarium at the University of California, Berkeley, are leading scientists specializing in the study of ferns.

John Mickel first went to Mexico in 1957 as a botany graduate student, and immediately recognized that Mexico lacked comprehensive analysis of its wealth of ferns. Producing a fern flora for that country was an idea born then. Bringing the idea to fruition 47 years later has been a journey of many steps, including extensive fieldwork, cataloging and detailed recording, laboratory work, and DNA analysis. Both authors spent much of the last 10 years traveling to herbaria around the world to research fern collections.

Alan Smith was the first Ph.D. graduate student to study under Mickel's direction. They met at Iowa State University. In 1969, Mickel moved to the east coast, to work at The New York Botanical Garden, and Smith to the west coast, to work at the University Herbarium at UC Berkeley. *Pteridophytes of Mexico* reflects their continuing collaboration over four decades.

Milestones along the way include the publication in 1981 by Alan Smith of a flora on the ferns of the Mexican state of Chiapas. In 1988, John Mickel co-authored a flora of the ferns of Oaxaca, Mexico's most diverse state in number of fern species and habitats, and, in 1992, a flora of western Mexico (Nueva Galicia).

About the International Association for Plant Taxonomy

The purpose of the Association, founded at the Seventh International Botanical Congress in Stockholm on July 18, 1950, is to carry out projects of interest and concern to systematic biologists, especially those that require or profit from international cooperation. It advances basic science to better understand the biodiversity on Earth and to promote conservation.

About Science at The New York Botanical Garden

The New York Botanical Garden is among the top three free-standing botanical gardens in the world where plant research is conducted. The unparalleled staff and resources of our International Plant Science Center, distinguished in scope, depth, authority, and excellence, position the Garden at the forefront of worldwide botanical research.

The Botanical Garden's scientists, staff, graduate students, and honorary research associates and curators perform fieldwork and conduct cutting-edge research in plant systematics, economic botany, ecology, molecular systematics, and plant genomics.

###

The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant kingdom. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of living plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive education programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging research programs of the International Plant Science Center.

The New York Botanical Garden is located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. April through October and 10 a.m.–5 p.m. November through March. For more information, visit www.nybg.org or call 718.817.8700.

Contacts: George Shakespear or Maria Izquierdo 718.817.8616