



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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## **Prominent Botanist and Ecologist Sir Ghilleen Prance Receives Gold Medal of The New York Botanical Garden**

**November 20, 2008**

The Board of The New York Botanical Garden will present the Gold Medal of The New York Botanical Garden to Sir Ghilleen (Iain) T. Prance, FRS, VMH, on November 20, 2008. The medal, the highest honor conferred by the Botanical Garden and awarded very infrequently, acknowledges contributions made by individuals in the fields of horticulture, plant science, and education. Edward P. Bass, Vice Chairman, will present the award at the 117th Annual Meeting of the Corporation of The New York Botanical Garden. The last Gold Medal recipient was Edward O. Wilson, Ph.D., on May 1, 2002.

Sir Iain Prance will be recognized for more than a quarter century of service and ongoing extraordinary dedication to the mission of The New York Botanical Garden and to botany and horticulture internationally. He served as a scientist and scientific administrator at The New York Botanical Garden, arriving as a postdoctoral research associate in 1963 and departing as Senior Vice President for Science and Founding Director of the Institute of Economic Botany in 1988, when he returned to his native Great Britain. He became Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, (1988–1999) and was knighted in 1995.

During his 25 years at The New York Botanical Garden, Iain Prance conducted prodigious plant exploration and research, mentored graduate students, developed new programs and partnerships, and championed the importance of plant conservation and sustainable development.

In the botanical exploration of Amazonian Brazil, there is probably no contemporary name more prominent than that of Iain Prance. In 1964 he began developing a program of exploration in the Amazon, working with local botanical institutions, most notably the National Amazonian Research Institute in Manaus, where he also developed the first graduate program in botany in Amazonian Brazil. In the course of his field work for the Garden in Amazonia, Iain Prance and his collaborators discovered more than 400 plant species new to science.

While at The New York Botanical Garden, Iain Prance became a world expert in a number of important Amazonian plant families, such as the coco-plum family and most notably the Brazil-nut family. He publishes actively; many of his research results have appeared in *Flora Neotropica* and other New York Botanical Garden Press publications.

Iain Prance is vitally interested in the documentation of the use of plants by indigenous peoples in Amazonia. That led him to found the Garden's Institute of Economic Botany in 1981, whose programs continue to thrive and grow.

Today, Sir Iain Prance is active as ever. He serves as Scientific Director of the Eden Project in England. He is constantly traveling, lecturing, and collecting and studying plants. He continues his association with The New York Botanical Garden as a Distinguished Counsellor to the Board and as an Honorary Curator in the Botanical Science Division.

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**The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit our Web site at [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org)**

**The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.**

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