

## John Goldie Award - 2011

In August 2011, Dr. Jim Pringle completed 48 years of service as the Plant Taxonomist at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton becoming the longest-serving employee at that institution. But it is not simply his long tenure at RBG that makes him an important figure in the field of botany in Ontario. During his career, not only has he made (and very importantly, still making) fundamental discoveries in science, he has been sharing his knowledge with both the scientific community and with amateur botanists alike. The Ontario Field Botanists are pleased to present the 2011 John Goldie Award to Jim Pringle in recognition of his combined contributions at all levels of botanical expertise, locally and internationally.

Dr. Pringle joined RBG in 1963 as a young Ph.D. graduate from University of Tennessee, where he completed his dissertation on the taxonomy of the Pneumonantheae, a section of the Gentian botanical family, in eastern North America. He went on to become a prolific scientific and technical writer and has described and named more than 15 new species and subspecies of plants. His particular area of interest and expertise deals with systematics and evolutionary relationships of vascular plants. He is also an expert in identifying plants in both the horticultural and natural botanical worlds, and has been involved in the systematics and taxonomy of lilacs and trilliums among other groups. Dr. Pringle is a world authority on the Gentianaceae (Gentian family), one of the largest families of flowering plants. In two recent scientific papers, for example, Dr. Pringle published the first botanical descriptions and official scientific names of nine new species of dwarf Gentians in the genus *Gentianella*, all from Peru.



He is one of the contributing authors of [The Flora of North America](#), an ambitious project that will eventually see a full description of the entire plant biodiversity of the continent. His specific contributions deal with the likes of Gypsophila, Surianaceae, and Syringa. His publication list exceeds 100 technical papers (too many to list here) on diverse plant species but the Gentianaceae are particularly well represented amongst those.

Working in co-operation with systematic botanists at many other institutions, Dr. Pringle investigates problems of classification, describes species new to science, and contributes portions of floristic manuals, especially on the Gentians. He has written, or has in preparation, revised classifications and descriptions of this and other plant groups for the floras of North America, Meso-America and portions of South America. In collaboration with colleagues at McMaster University, he has combined comparisons of genetic information with other techniques in evolutionary botany to examine the probable ancestry of lilacs suspected to be of hybrid origin. This technique has also been of great value in his ongoing studies of the status, distribution and

relationships of rare and potentially endangered polyploid species of *Solidago* (goldenrods) in the Great Lakes region.

Dr. Pringle's other research interest is in botanical history, in which he is acknowledged as the world's leading expert on the history of Canadian botanical exploration. Between 1985 and 1995, he contributed fully half of the material published in RBG's own scholarly journal, Canadian Horticultural History. He has also studied "heritage plants" in Ontario horticulture represented by plants persisting after cultivation at abandoned farm and village sites. Dr. Pringle has contributed greatly to the field botany community in Ontario, including publishing technical bulletins on the common asters and goldenrods of southern Ontario, the trilliums of Ontario, and also checklists of spontaneous plants at Royal Botanical Gardens.

More specific to the activities of the Field Botanists of Ontario, Jim has led at least nine field trips since the organization was first formed. Although he has shown some preference for visiting Chaffey's Locks and the Lake Opinicon field station, he has undertaken field events in other locations. He has, to his credit, led two of the more novel or interesting trips organized by FBO. One of these was the survey of plants that had become established in the inner city of Hamilton and Burlington Beach. Another particularly memorable trip was to look at ghost town botany in Haliburton. As well as leading trips for FBO, Jim has regularly led botanical trips for the local Hamilton Naturalist Club and the RBG. As well, he is an expert field ornithologist, and frequently leads bird-watching and plant-identification hikes.

In 2004, a new species of tree, *Macrocarpea pringleana*, was named in Dr. Pringle's honour. *M. pringleana* is a one- to five-metre tall resident of the Amazon-facing slopes of the Central Andes, just north of the equator. Though specimens of this species have been collected and deposited in herbaria around the world for decades, it is only recently that it has been fully described and named. Fittingly, this species is a member of the Gentian Family. Jason Grant, the author of the official description of the plant, recognized Dr. Pringle's lifelong study of the Gentianaceae and his contribution to the Flora of Ecuador, in which he wrote the extensive chapter on gentians.

It is with much pleasure that the FBO presents the John Goldie Award for 2011 to Jim Pringle, a most deserving recipient. The award recognizes the things that he has accomplished to date but we aware that there are more learned publications from him in press and pending and that he intends to keep sharing his great knowledge with others. Congratulations and Thank You, Jim!