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CHRONICLE

A person lives on Earth as long as they are remembered

folk wisdom

On the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mykola Hrysiuk (1924–2002)

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Abstract

The article is devoted to Mykola Hrysiuk (1924–2002), the forester, botanist and dendrologist, director of the "Olexandria" State Dendrological Park of the AS of UkrSSR (1958–1974), on the centenary of his birth. His life path, scientific achievements, organizational and public activities are highlighted. The principal publications of the researcher are provided.

Keywords: Mykola Hrysiuk, life path, research heritage, organizational achievements, Olexandria, dendrology, nature conservation

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In the autumn of 2024, one hundred years passed since the birth of Mykola Mykhailovych Hrysiuk – the forester, botanist, dendrologist, science organizer, and a person who devoted his entire life to the study and protection of nature.

Mykola Hrysiuk was born on November 24, 1924, in the picturesque village of Velyka Ofirna, Fastiv District, Kyiv Oblast, in a large family of Mykhailo and Paraskovia Hrysiuk. From the early years, Mykola often helped his father, a forestry worker, by collecting the seeds of various plants, planting forest crops, marking stumps in logged areas, extinguishing forest fires, and carrying out other forestry tasks to protect the forest. The respectful and

careful attitude his parents held towards the nature of their homeland was passed on to Mykola, undoubtedly determining his choice of profession and further life.

The hardships of war did not spare the Hrysiuk family. After completing the ninth grade at Irpin School, Mykola and other teenagers were evacuated to the eastern part of the country. He moved through various regions (Donetsk, Luhansk, Mykolaiv, and Rostov), where he helped dig anti-tank trenches and harvest crops. Thus, his childhood came to an end, and adult life began.

Then followed an arduous journey home and work in the forest, harvesting firewood. During this time, a young man's dream was born – to



Figure 1. Student Mykola Hrysiuk, late 1940s (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

dedicate himself to the study of the forest. In the woods, he also met partisans and became their liaison. His parents often hid partisans and members of the Kyiv underground resistance in their home. Due to a leg injury and prolonged treatment, the young partisan was not accepted into the army.

In 1945, after completing ten grades externally, he pursued his dream and enrolled in the Kyiv Forestry Institute (currently the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine), graduating with honors in 1949. During his student years, Mykola Hrysiuk began his first scientific research, participated in a student scientific circle under the guidance of Professor Volodymyr Povarnytsyn, and presented reports at Republican and All-Union scientific conferences, focusing particularly on the importance of afforestation in the steppes of Ukraine.

Mykola Hrysiuk was greatly influenced by the Institute's professors – outstanding

scholars and educators such as Yakiv Roll, Petro Pohrebniak, Ivan Zhytov, Kostiantyn Tymofieiev, and others. After graduating, driven by a strong desire to deepen his knowledge of forests and steppe afforestation, he entered the postgraduate program at the Institute of Forestry of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR. His academic advisor was Professor Boris Logginov.

His research focused on *Gleditsia triacanthos* L., which was being actively introduced into forestry practice at that time. Mykola Hrysiuk studied the biological characteristics of honey locust, developed recommendations for selecting companion species, shelterbelt structure, and cultivation techniques, and laid the scientific foundations for protective afforestation using this species.

During his postgraduate studies, in addition to working on his dissertation, he was actively involved in establishing protective forest belts in the Mykolaiv Oblast, greening Kyiv, and developing a forest seed production system in the Motovylivka forestry. He also studied protective plantations across Ukraine, Moldova, and Central Asia.

In 1952, he completed his postgraduate studies and successfully defended his dissertation “The use of *Gleditsia* L. in protective afforestation in Ukraine”. In 1953, he gained a PhD in Agricultural Sciences (Candidate of Agriculture Sciences).

After completing his postgraduate studies, Mykola Hrysiuk worked as a senior research fellow at the Dendropark “Veseli Bokovenky” of the Institute of Forestry (currently the M. Davydov “Veseli Bokovenky” Dendropark, Kirovohrad Oblast), where he studied the biological characteristics of *Pinus nigra* J.F. Arnold and led the restoration of pine forests using an original technology he developed (Hrysiuk, 1956).

Under his leadership and direct involvement, a forest crop plot of over five hectares was established, planted with black pine, which eventually grew into a dense, tall pine forest – his true masterpiece, a source of pride, and a legacy left in the steppe for future generations. He also created a collection plot of exotic plant species covering over 1.5 hectares, with seeds obtained through exchanges with various domestic and foreign botanical gardens. Additionally, he undertook



Figure 2. Mykola Hrysiuk with his wife on Volodymyrska Hill, Kyiv, 1951 (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

diverse work on restoring park landscape compositions.

Due to the reorganization of the Institute of Forestry of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR, in June 1956, Mykola Hrysiuk was transferred to the Polissia Agromelioration Research Station of the Ukrainian Research Institute of Forestry and Forest Melioration (village of Pershotravneve, Zhytomyr Oblast). He worked as Head of the Forest Cultures Department and later combined this role with Deputy Director for Scientific Work.

On his initiative, experimental production plots of forest cultures were established in various forestries of the Ovruch Forest Enterprise, featuring species of such genera as *Pinus* L., *Quercus* L., *Betula* L., *Populus* L., etc. Together with colleagues, he conducted cultivation experiments on those species. In 1957, he was awarded the academic title of Senior Research Fellow in Forest Science.

In 1958, the young researcher, equipped with experience and knowledge, was appointed Senior Research Fellow at the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park of the Academy of Sciences of UkrSSR (currently

the “Oleksandria” State Dendrological Park of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine). The park was subordinated to the Central Republican Botanical Garden of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR (currently the M.M. Gryshko National Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) in Bila Tserkva, Kyiv Oblast.

Shortly thereafter, Mykola Hrysiuk was appointed director of the dendrological park, a position he dedicated over 16 years with outstanding commitment.

Driven by a strong desire to restore and improve the park, transforming it into a true gem of the Kyiv Oblast and beyond, he enthusiastically undertook numerous important organizational and managerial tasks. The park’s fascinating history, the remnants of architectural structures and other valuable elements requiring preservation and restoration, its rich dendroflora diversity, and picturesque landscapes inspired the young director not only to actively work on the revival of the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park but also to pursue scientific research (Boiko, 2018).



Figure 3. Mykola Hrysiuk (in the centre) with colleagues at a young pine stand in the “Veseli Bokovenky” Dendrological Park, Kirovohrad Region, 1956 (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

An extraordinary contribution was made to restoring the park’s landscapes during his tenure. Thanks to his exceptional organizational skills, top specialists, including the Kyiv architect Dmytro Kryvoruchko, were engaged. Numerous architectural structures of significant historical importance, which formed the compositional core of the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park, were restored (Hrysiuk et al., 1961). In total, over 40 architectural elements were renovated, including the Main Entrance, the Rotunda Pavilion, the Column of Sorrow, the Ruins, the Chinese Bridge, the Luna Colonnade, the bridge to the Island of Dreams (now Maria’s Island), and several others (Hrysiuk, 1965, 1969).

New park structures were also constructed, such as the Entrance Gate, the Lion Spring Complex, and a Round Pavilion in the park’s western section. A gas boiler house was built, the park was fenced, a vehicle fleet was established, an asphalt road was laid, and the decorative ponds were cleaned, among other improvements.

Under his leadership, a tremendous amount of work was carried out to plant trees and shrubs throughout the park, and new landscape compositions were created in the western section (the Walnut Glade and Paliy Hill) and the eastern section (the Sunny and Eastern Glades). Between 1959 and 1962, a collection plot named Fruticetum was established, gathering collections of *Crataegus* L., *Lonicera* L., *Philadelphus* L., *Syringa* L., *Spiraea* L., and other genera (Hrysiuk et al., 1961).

At his initiative, in 1962, together with Borys Balkovskyi (and later joined by research associate Pavlo Chavchenko, along with support from other park employees) a museum of the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park was established in the Directorate building. This museum still operates as the Scientific and Educational Center (Galkin, 2006, 2010, 2012).

The young director skillfully balanced daily operational challenges with scientific research. He conducted in-depth studies of the park’s dendroflora, focusing on the introduction and acclimatization of plant species. Plant



Figure 4. Mykola Hrysiuk at the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park near the Great Glade, 1960s (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).



Figure 5. Mykola Hrysiuk at the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park, Bila Tserkva, 1960s (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

material for these efforts was collected during numerous expeditions across various country regions. Mykola Hrysiuk showed particular scientific interest in members of the Fabaceae family, studying their acclimatization characteristics, cultivation methods, and other biological aspects. Additionally, he was preparing his doctoral dissertation dedicated to the study of legumes.

He inspired his colleagues. Under his guidance and direct involvement, extensive work was undertaken to establish collection plots of ornamental shrubs. These collections included over 140 species of trees and shrubs, among them more than 100 species and forms from the Fabaceae family, as well as various other plant species (Galkin & Osyka, 2003).

At the same time, to introduce new species promising for landscape architecture, a scientific collection plot of ornamental flowering shrubs, known as the Fruticetum, was established and covered ca. 1.4 hectares. This collection exists to date.

The dendrological park became a workplace for many prominent scientists and dendrologists, including Borys Balkovskiy, Mariia Oliinyk, Ivan Derii, Alim Rubtsov, Tetiana Cherevchenko, Serhii Galkin, and others.

By 1960, following the resolutions of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR and guided by the approved state program “Scientific foundations of green construction in the Ukrainian SSR”, the park’s staff undertook a five-year scientific project titled “Restoration and development of the ‘Oleksandria’ Dendrological Park”. This project addressed the theoretical principles and practical implementation of restoration efforts within the park’s territory (Boiko, 2018).

In the eastern part of the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park, on the first floodplain terrace of the Ros’ River, one of Ukraine’s first scientific collections of *Populus* species and hybrids, currently known as the Populetum, was established. Covering an area of 3 ha, the collection included 98 species and hybrids of



Figure 6. Mykola Hrysiuk (on the left), Borys Balkovskyy (in the centre), and Oleksii Lypa (on the right) at the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park, Bila Tserkva, 1960s (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

poplar, with a total of 2,200 saplings planted in the park’s territory.

Significant attention from the scientists at the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park was also devoted to improving the condition of the historical park landscapes and compositions. The most excellent care was given to areas such as the Luna Colonnade (where yews were planted), the Main Entrance (with plantings along the Main Alley), and Paliy Hill. To restore the mature oak grove, 782 oak saplings were planted, and 222 pine saplings were introduced along Skvyra Road. The composition of the natural herbaceous cover was notably enhanced. In the mature oak grove alone, 23,000 *Scilla* L., 10,000 *Galanthus nivalis* L., and other decorative plants were planted, totaling 43,000 bulbs.

Between 1961 and 1965, important and necessary work was carried out in the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park to protect plantings from diseases and pests. Annual maintenance practices included filling hollows in old trees and cleaning their crowns of European mistletoe. A park guide

titled “Oleksandria Park” was published and the seed catalog was issued as part of the research efforts. In general, ten scientific works were published during this period (Boiko, 2018).

From 1969 to 1973, research was conducted on the topic “Study of the dendroflora and development of methods for its enrichment in the Forest-Steppe zone of Ukraine”. This work resulted in the publication of one collection of research papers, one guidebook, four catalogs, and 40 scientific articles. During this time, 515,000 tree seedlings were cultivated, with 266,000 transferred for production use.

In 1969, by decision No. 153 of the State Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers for Science and Technology dated March 22, the Department for Dendroflora Enrichment initiated research “Development of methods for establishing clonal plantations of *Picea* in the Forest-Steppe zone of Ukraine” led by Borys Loginov. This project led to the establishment of unique Norway spruce (*Picea abies* (L.) H. Karst.) plantations within the Fastiv Forestry, Kyiv Oblast.

Alongside his scientific work, Mykola Hrysiuk was actively involved in public and social activities. Serving as a deputy of the Bila Tserkva City Council of Workers' Deputies (1961–1965) and chairman of the municipal improvement commission, he supervised landscaping and greening projects in Bila Tserkva and nearby villages, including Vilna Tarasivka and Oleinykova Sloboda.

Every year, the dendrological park participated in city flower exhibitions and proudly showcased its scientific achievements at the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy (commonly known as VDNH).

In 1956–1960, the flower collection at the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park already included 640 varieties of perennial, annual, and greenhouse plants. The park conducted trials of 150 varieties of dahlias, 180 varieties of tulips, 50 varieties of phlox, 70 varieties of gladiolus, and 106 varieties of irises, among others (Galkin & Boiko, 2018).

Mykola Hrysiuk was also deeply engaged in environmental protection efforts. He served as a member of the presidium of the city Society for Nature Protection, head of its city branch, and a member of the Plenum of the Republican Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments (1962–1974). Additionally, he acted as a consultant to the State Committee of the Council of Ministers of the UkrSSR for Nature Conservation.

Committed to fostering a deep love and respectful attitude toward nature among youth, he regularly delivered lectures at the Bila Tserkva Agricultural Institute, where he taught a three-year course in forestry. He also designed an engaging lecture series for city tour guides, focusing on notable landmarks of Bila Tserkva and the “Oleksandria” Dendrological Park.

In recognition of his significant contributions to environmental protection, he was awarded the title of Honorary Member of the Ukrainian Society for Nature Conservation, and in 1994, his name was entered into the Society's Book of Honor.

In 1974, Mykola Hrysiuk moved to Kyiv, where he continued his scientific and environmental work as a senior research fellow in the Department of Forest Resources at the Council for the Study of Productive Forces of Ukraine of the Academy of Sciences of the UkrSSR. He held this position until 1997.



Figure 8. Mykola Hrysiuk with his wife Ninel (on the right) and daughter Olha (in the centre), Khreshchatyk, Kyiv, 1983 (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

During this period, he focused primarily on developing the scientific foundations for the rational use and protection of natural resources in the Polissia region, particularly concerning land reclamation (melioration).

His research emphasized the preservation and protection of wetland ecosystems. He conducted scientific studies and public awareness campaigns about the harmful environmental effects caused by excessive drainage of forestlands. Moreover, he developed forecasts regarding the sustainable use and conservation of Ukraine's forest resources.

Mykola Hrysiuk prepared and submitted several scientific policy briefs on nature conservation to state authorities, which later influenced national and regional legislation. A significant outcome was the adoption by the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR of the resolution titled “On measures to increase the economic efficiency and ecological



Figure 7. Mykola Hrysiuk in the 1970s (photo from the Hrysiuk family archive).

justification of land drainage in the Polissia zone of the Ukrainian SSR” (dated June 4, 1983, No. 263). This resolution granted protected status to 244 wetland complexes covering an area of 177,000 ha and officially halted all drainage of wetlands.

At a time when unjustified drainage of wetland areas had already begun, this was a significant victory. Many swampy territories were not previously part of protected areas. Adopting this resolution enabled the preservation of unique natural landscapes and associated biodiversity, while also contributing to stabilizing the region’s climatic and environmental conditions.

Mykola Hrysiuk left a valuable scientific legacy for future generations, with over 90 publications spanning forestry, dendrology, and nature conservation. He authored and co-authored several monographs, including “Peat and wetland resources – rational use and protection” (Palamarchuk et al., 1986), “Wild edible, industrial, and honey plants of Ukraine” (Hrysiuk et al., 1989), and “Leguminous plants in protective

afforestation in Ukraine” (Hrysiuk & Tsarenko, 1991). In addition, he produced numerous scientific articles and brochures, with works dedicated to parks such as “Veseli Bokovenky” (Hrysiuk, 1956) and “Oleksandria” (Hrysiuk et al., 1961; Hrysiuk, 1965, 1969), alongside popular science publications like “Meadow and Wetland Plants” (Yelin & Hrysiuk, 1991).

Together with his wife, Ninell, Mykola Hrysiuk raised two children who also became biologists, earned their candidate degrees, and continue to carry forward their father’s scientific legacy.

Mykola Hrysiuk died on 13 April 2002 in Kyiv. The lasting memory of Mykola Hrysiuk, as well as profound gratitude for his invaluable contributions to the restoration and preservation of biodiversity in the historic park, live on within his family, among colleagues at the “Oleksandria” State Dendrological Park of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and at the various scientific institutions where he worked with great dedication.

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До 100 річчя від дня народження Миколи Грисюка (1924–2002)

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Стаття присвячена сторіччю від дня народження Миколи Михайловича Грисюка (1924–2002), лісівника, ботаніка та дендролога, директора Державного дендрологічного парку "Олександрія" АН УРСР (1958–1974). Висвітлено його життєвий шлях, науковий доробок, організаційну й громадську діяльність. Наведено основні праці дослідника.

Ключові слова: Микола Грисюк, життєвий шлях, наукова спадщина, організаційна діяльність, Олександрія, дендрологія, охорона природи