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CHRONICLE

In memoriam of Oleksandra Petrivna Isaykina

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Abstract

In February 8, 2025, the candidate of biological sciences (1973), laureate of the State Prize of Ukraine in Science and Technology (1992), author of ca. 80 scientific publications, Oleksandra Petrivna Isaykina, passed away. She was a friendly, sensitive and erudite person, sincerely devoted to botanical science.

Oleksandra worked at the M.M. Gryshko National Botanical Garden of the NAS of Ukraine since 1984, holding the positions of senior and leading researcher. The major topic of her research activities were the resources of medicinal plants. She worked in the Department of Medicinal Botany, where she was the curator of the “Medicinal Plants” plot. After expeditions to the Danube Plains Nature Reserve, she created a motherwort of selected forms of sea buckthorn, which served as the basis for industrial culture. Later, while working in the Department of Natural Flora, she was the head of the Herbarium, where she organized the card index, conducted an inventory of several families, and processed the Far Eastern herbarium of Sigismund Kharkevich, which he donated to the botanical garden.

Keywords: Oleksandra Isaykina, chronicle, M.M. Gryshko National Botanical Garden

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In February 8, 2025, Oleksandra Petrivna Isaykina, the candidate of biological sciences (1973) and laureate of the State Prize of Ukraine in Science and Technology (1992), passed away.

Oleksandra Isaykina was born on September 14, 1937, in the village of Novo-Bogoroditske, Petropavlovsk district, Voronezh region (Russian Federation), in the family of an official.

In 1955–1957, after graduating from secondary school, she worked as a librarian and a primary school teacher. Without leaving

her job, she received higher education at Voronezh State University, which she entered in 1955. In 1961, she successfully graduated from the Faculty of Biology and Soil Sciences of the University and received a diploma as a biologist-botanist, biology, and chemistry teacher in secondary school. Until 1964, she worked as a biology and chemistry teacher at various schools in the Voronezh region.

In 1964, Oleksandra started work at the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Medicinal Plants (VILR), currently named All-Russian Scientific Research Institute



Figure 1. Oleksandra Petrivna Isaykina (1937–2025).

of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (VILAR) in Moscow. In VILAR she worked as a junior scientist and research associate of the laboratory of natural plant resources. In 1968, she entered the graduate school of this institution for absentee training. In 1973, she defended her thesis on the topic “The recourses of Immortal sandy (*Helichrysum arenarium* (L.) Moench) in Ukraine and some questions of his biology” and earned the degree of candidate of biological sciences (PhD). Since May 1980, she worked as a senior researcher at the VILR laboratory. In 1982, she received the academic title of senior researcher.

Oleksandra loved her work and did it with great enthusiasm and interest. She proved herself to be a good organizer and leader: she headed special teams for expeditions that, throughout the former Soviet Union, identified resources, registered, and investigated the mode of exploitation of medicinal plants used in the pharmaceutical industry. Her scientific achievements during this period also included participating in developing two pharmacopoeia articles, developing a methodology for determining medicinal plant resource reserves, and co-authoring five instructions for collecting and drying medicinal plants.

In 1984, Oleksandra married for the second

time and changed her employment and residence place. She moved to Kyiv, where she was employed as a senior researcher at the Department of Medicinal Botany of the National Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (formerly – Central Republican Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine). Her extensive experience in expeditionary and organizational work came in handy at the Botanical Garden. She became the curator of the “Medicinal Plants” plot. She also actively participated in expeditions across Ukraine.

In particular, during expeditionary surveys in the Danube Plains Nature Reserve, about 100 samples of sea buckthorn fruits were selected for further biochemical research to identify the best combination of economically valuable traits. There were about 1,700 cuttings of previously discovered forms of this beneficial plant, which were collected, and a mother plant of selected forms was created in the Botanical Garden as the basis of industrial culture. She participated in the “Republican program for studying the form diversity of sea buckthorn and its use for securing ravines”. A biological reserve of sea buckthorn was determined on Kuban Island, and specimens of 204 species of medicinal plants were collected for the herbarium. This collection has been transferred to the Herbariums of the National Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine and the Institute of Botany of the National Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine. In 1986, she was approved to be a leading researcher.

In 1992, Oleksandra moved to the Department of Natural Flora of the National Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine as the Head of the Herbarium. In a new position, she organized the herbarium collection, which moved to a new building, restored the herbarium card index, and processed the Far Eastern herbarium of Sigismund Kharkevich, which he gave as presents to the National Botanical Garden. Based on the results of this work, she made a detailed scientific report outlining especially valuable specimens of Kharkevich’s collection. She conducted an inventory of Lamiaceae, Rosaceae, and Orchidaceae herbarium collections and collected the macrophytes of the middle Dnipro and Kaniv reservoirs.

In 2000, with her active participation, the Botanical Garden held the “Plants of the Holy Scripture” exhibition. At that exhibition, herbarium sheets were presented to a wide audience as an illustration of quotes from the Holy Scripture for the first time. Oleksandra took an active part in the work of the Council of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums of Ukraine. For some time, she served as the Secretary of the Council. For a long time, Oleksandra Isaykina led the “Young Herbalists” group of the Kyiv City House of Nature and conducted practical classes for medical school students. She never refused botany consultations for young scientists, gave consultation from resource science, and honestly reviewed their abstracts.

Oleksandra Isaykina was the author and coauthor of ca. 80 scientific works, including

the monograph “Dwarf everlastin Ukraine” (Kyiv, Naukova Dumka, 1992). In 1992, Oleksandra became a laureate of the State Prize of Ukraine in Science and Technology as a coauthor of the book “Medicinal plants: Encyclopedic reference guide” (Kyiv, Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia, 1989).

After retiring, Oleksandra continued to communicate with colleagues at the Botanical Garden, always taking the news of the collective with interest.

Oleksandra had an incredible voice – a deep, velvety contralto, and she became a member of an amateur ensemble that often performed at folk festivals in her district. Oleksandra was friendly, sensitive, erudite, and sincerely devoted to botanical science.

She will remain like that in our memory.

Пам'яті Олександри Петрівни Ісайкіної

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Восьмого лютого 2025 року померла кандидат біологічних наук (1973), лауреат Державної премії України в галузі науки і техніки (1992), автор близько 80 наукових праць, Олександра Петрівна Ісайкіна. Вона була доброзичливою, чуйною та ерудованою людиною, щиро відданою ботанічній науці.

Олександра Петрівна працювала в Національному ботанічному саду імені М.М. Гришка НАН України з 1984 року, займаючи посади старшого і провідного наукового співробітника. Головним напрямком її наукової діяльності було ресурсознавство лікарських рослин. Вона працювала у відділі медичної ботаніки, де була куратором ділянки “Лікарські рослини”. Після експедицій до заповідника “Дунайські плавні” нею було створено маточник відібраних форм обліпихи, який використовувався як основа промислової культури. Згодом, працюючи у відділі природної флори, вона завідувала Гербарієм, де впорядкувала картотеку, провела інвентаризацію кількох родин, обробила далекосхідний гербарій Сигізмунда Харкевича, який він передав у дар ботанічному саду.

Ключові слова: Олександра Ісайкіна, хроніка, Національний ботанічний сад імені М.М. Гришка