

## The Saint-Petersburg University Botanic Garden

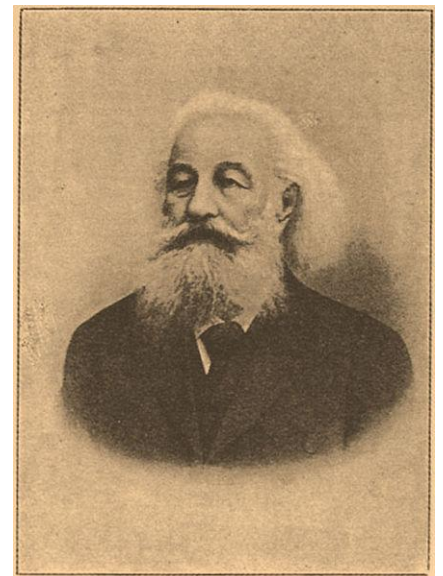
The Saint-Petersburg University is the oldest university in Russia, and so is our Botanic Garden. Throughout its one hundred and fifty year's history the Garden has continually evolved and developed to the point that today it is recognized as a classic yet contemporary botanic garden at the heart of the Saint-Petersburg University. Creation of the university Botanic Garden facilitated the rise of Russian botany as both a scientific school and a field of study.

### The Beginnings

The first major figure in the history of the Garden was Academician Andrey Beketov, whose initiative in 1864 resulted in a University Academic Board decision. The ground planning and first two buildings of the Garden were finished in 1870.

The core function of the Garden was seen as a source of life samples of local and ecdemic species to supply lectures and practical training at the university chair for Botanics.

While the first open soil plantations were made in 1871 and the first greenhouse samples received in 1872, the core collections of the Botanic Garden and the University herbarium were mainly formed by a group of students supervised by Andrey Beketov, that collected plants samples, seeds, rhizomes and tubers from local areas of imperial Petersburg, Finland and Sweden. A number of unique samples were delivered from



distant expeditions. Most members of that group are now known as prominent botanists and biologists: Robert Regel, Christophor Gobi, Ivan Borodin, Andrei Famitsin, Sergei Kostitchev, Kliment Timiryazev, Vladimir Komarov, Gavriil Tanfiljev, Michail Zaleskij and others.

*View of the greenhouse 1899*

Andrey Beketov strived for the most competitive development of the Garden and thus spent the whole year of 1885 visiting the best botanic gardens around Europe. The results of the research carried out at the Universita Petropolitana Botanic Garden became well-known in academic society after Beketov launched the “Scripta Botanica” magazine in 1886.

In 1892 Rudolf Nimann succeeded Beketov as the university senior gardener and botanist for the next 28 years. According to Nimann’s index the Botanic Garden then counted 188 species of 65 genera and 29 families of ground trees and shrubs (1894) and around 2500 species of 124 families of greenhouse plants (1901).

## **XX Century**

The Garden suffered great losses and destruction during World War II and especially the 900 days Siege of Leningrad. During the Siege a few big samples (mostly palms) were evacuated from the Garden and brought to the city hospitals, thus surviving the war. Some of them (*Livistona Chinensis*, *Macrozamia Spiralis*, *Trachycarpus Fortunei*, *Chamaerops Humilis*) can be still found in today’s Garden.

Restoration after WW II was mainly accomplished by 1950 and turned into a continuous expansion of the Garden’s collection and facilities such as the new large greenhouse for palms constructed in 1974.



*The large Palm House*



## The Present

As 150 years ago, today the Garden still maintains its double function of both study and research department.



*The Palm House*

With its current overall area of 2.6 hectares, the modern SPbU Botanic Garden includes about 1300 square meters of greenhouses accommodating 3000 tropical and subtropical species, including 30 rare or endangered species, and a large arboretum with more than 200 species of trees and shrubs, among which we are proud to have *Juglans Mandshurica*, *Cercidiphyllum Japonicum*, *Eleuterococcus Senticosus*, *Calopanax sp.*, *Asistolochia Manshuriensis* and a 60-year old *Robinia Pseudoacacia*.





*Water Lily (Nymphaea sp.)*

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