

IN MEMORIAM—JAMES S. PRINGLE

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The Great Lakes region has lost one of its most eminent botanists with the passing of Dr. James Scott Pringle, Jim to all Great Lakes botanists, on September 3, 2024, in Hamilton, Ontario.

Jim was born in Danvers, Massachusetts, on August 14, 1937, and grew up in Laconia, New Hampshire, where he attended public school and graduated high school in 1954. Jim developed an acquaintance with the local flora through all the natural areas close to town. His interest in cultivated flora was attributable to his mother and a next-door neighbor, whose gardens were developed “more as plant collections than as landscaping” (Pringle 1995). Jim received his Bachelor’s degree in 1958 from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and a Master’s degree in 1960 from the University of New Hampshire at Durham. Jim first developed his interest in lilacs (*Syringa*) working at the University of New Hampshire with the renowned lilac expert, Dr. Owen M. Rogers. Jim moved south for his doctorate, working on the systematics of gentians (*Gentiana*) with Dr. Aaron J. “Jack” Sharp at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Jim went directly from his graduate work to join the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton, Ontario in 1963, where he spent his entire career (Figure 1).

As a plant taxonomist at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Jim was able to work both with cultivated plants, especially lilacs and *Clematis*, and also with the wild flora, including expanding his work on the Gentianaceae, working with the flora of the Great Lakes, and developing an interest in naturalized plants of the Ontario flora. In addition to his work on plants, Jim developed an interest in botanical history, especially the plant exploration of Canada and the Great Lakes region. In this latter interest, he was influenced by Dr. Joseph Ewan, then of Tulane University, Dr. Ronald L. Stuckey of Ohio State University, and Dr. Edward G. Voss of the University of Michigan.

Jim enjoyed studying plants in the field. Having developed an appreciation of the southern Appalachian flora while at Knoxville for graduate work, he participated for many springs in the Great Smoky Mountains wildflower pilgrimage (of which his major professor, Dr. Sharp, was one of the founders) until prevented by COVID. Dr. Sharp taught bryology during the summer at the University of Michigan Biological Station (U.M.B.S.), and encouraged Jim to attend. There, as a graduate student in 1961, a teaching assistant in 1962, and an investigator in 1963, Jim developed a lifelong interest in Great Lakes endemics and other special plants of the Great Lakes shorelines, noting: “Of all my time at universities, I most enjoyed my summers at U.M.B.S.” (Pringle 1995). He was especially in-



FIGURE 1. Jim Pringle at the Royal Botanical Gardens in the 1960s. Photo courtesy of the Royal Botanical Gardens Archive.

terested in chromosome numbers of Great Lakes shoreline plants, goldenrods, and introduced species. Largely during his stays at the Biological Station, Jim collected nearly 200 herbarium specimens in Michigan, most of them housed at the University of Michigan Herbarium. He was also responsible for the herbarium at the Royal Botanical Gardens, an important repository of specimens of the Ontario flora, the gentian family, and cultivated plants (Figure 2).

Jim's botanical publications have been numerous and diverse. He has contributed treatments of the gentian family to many flora projects, including *Flora of North America*, *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California*, and various regional and neotropical floras. His publications ranged from floras to nomenclature to taxonomic treatments of selected plant groups, both cultivated and wild, to botanical history. He contributed 15 papers to *The Michigan Botanist* and *The Great Lakes Botanist* from 1965 to 2022 (Appendix 1). Among his scholarly and detailed papers on botanical history, one especially noteworthy contribution should be better known, his *Botanical Exploration of the Canadian Watershed of Lake Huron During the Nineteenth Century* (Pringle 1989), as it



FIGURE 2. Jim Pringle in the Herbarium at the Royal Botanical Gardens examining a gentian specimen, 2016. Photo by Mark Zelinski.

forms a companion treatise to Ed Voss's *Botanical Beachcombers and Explorers* (Voss 1978).

Over his career, Jim described about 50 new species of plant, mostly in the gentian family, and made large numbers of new combinations as he modernized classifications, especially in the gentian family. He also described, with Pamela Laureto, the Michigan endemic goldenrod *Solidago vossii* J. S. Pringle & Laureto (Laureto and Pringle 2010).

In parallel with his enjoyment of plants in the wild, Jim enjoyed sharing his knowledge of plants. He was an adjunct Associate Professor of Biology at McMaster University in Hamilton starting in 1974 and taught various botany courses there for many years, and he also taught summer classes at the Queen's University Biological Station on Opinicon Lake near Chaffey's Lock, Ontario. This was in addition to numerous courses and field trips for the public at the Royal Botanical Gardens. He was also a stalwart field trip leader for the Field Botanists of Ontario, and he had other natural history interests as well, including birding.

For his contributions to Ontario botany, the Field Botanists of Ontario presented Jim with the John Goldie Award in 2011. In 2023, the Canadian Botanical Association granted him its most prestigious award, the Lawson Medal, for his cumulative contributions to Canadian botany. In addition, the Royal Botanical Gardens dedicated the James Pringle Gentian Garden in 2013 for his 50th anniversary on staff.

Three recently described members of the gentian family honor Jim's contributions to plant systematics: *Gentiana pringlei* M. Shabir, P. Agnihotri, J. K. Ti-

wari & T. Husain; *Kuepferia pringlei* D. Maity & S. K. Dey; and *Macrocarpaea pringleana* J. R. Grant.

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