



FLORA IRANICA

FLORA IRANICA, a monumental work on the plants of Persia. Edited by Karl Heinz Rechinger of Vienna since 1963, *Flora Iranica* now consists of some 172 fascicles and is nearly complete. Only two spermatophyte families, the Cyperaceae and the Rubiaceae, are as yet lacking; the Fabaceae with the extensive genera *Astragalus* and *Astracantha* have not been finished. The club mosses, the horsetails, and the ferns have also not yet been published.

More than ten thousand species of flowering plants, gymnosperms, and ferns have been recorded for the Iranian Highlands. This area is a center of the world's biodiversity, exhibiting many foci of speciation and evolution of higher plant taxa, such as tribes, genera, and species, and of intraspecific evolution, especially non-arboreal xerophytes. The mountainous regions are particularly rich in neotendemes: e.g. the Apiaceae, Asteraceae, Boraginaceae, Brassicaceae, Fabaceae, Lamiaceae, Plumbaginaceae, Poaceae, and Scrophulariaceae are large families in the Iranian Highland and well represented in the Northern Hemisphere flora. Within these families there are clusters of speciation centers, such as the genus *Ferula* (53 species) within the Apiaceae, the genus *Cousinia* (353 species) within the Asteraceae, 126 genera within the Brassicaceae, the genera *Astragalus* and *Astracantha* (approximately more than 1000 species) within the Fabaceae, the genus *Nepeta* (59 species) within the Lamiaceae and the genus *Acantholimon* (164 species) within the Plumbaginaceae. In addition, the diversity of the flora is enriched by refugia on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea where a good number of species with a one time wider distribution survived glacial times.



The *Flora Iranica* is the most comprehensive survey available of the flora of the Iranian Highland and adjacent regions. It provides, along with other botanical surveys of Persia (see bibliography), an essential foundation for floristic, systematic, and geobotanical research on this area, and it testifies to the tremendous diversity of the flora in this region.

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