

Editorial

The paper by Wharton and Lancaster published in this issue serves to remind us of problems that arise when we bring rare or unusual plants into cultivation. Wharton's account of re-introduction, in this case of *Carrierea calycina*, reports earlier at least partially successful introductions. Lancaster provides the background of successful cultivation. The satisfying part of their story is that their re-introductions are from seed.

Botanical gardens provide expertise for *in situ* conservation as well as being repositories for *ex situ* activities. The *ex situ* function is not an issue for common forms, but movement of rarities into cultivation may lead to difficulties that arise from a collector's urge to 'have one of those in our garden'. It is not clear from the Wharton and Lancaster paper if the distribution of seed was accompanied by a request for the recipients to keep a concise diary of the handling and progress of the materials to ensure the collection of (standardized) information to increase the recorded experience that came from growing these materials. The opportunity to have access to this and other seemingly rare and uncultivated material would be well exploited by asking each recipient to share experience gained during early cultivation of new material. This simple contribution would ensure that the knowledge is retained and not left to chance. While there may be a few seeking to control technical information for profit, the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) provides a framework for information to be gathered at one or more botanical gardens and shared with the country of origin.

The ideal that botanical garden collections contain accessions of an adequate sound sample size (some say 5 seed source specimens and not merely 5 copies of a single clone) presents a dilemma for collectors who find a single specimen with perhaps only vegetative prospects. The col-

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lection and successful propagation of vegetative material is an important first step, it is important to train local people to collect seed, and to return to the site when seed is available. Both of these are important, though costly in both time and money; but they do contribute to the sponsoring botanical garden's essential obligations to the Convention for Biological Diversity.

The paper by Saarela is another example of how researchers can provide reliable information when the biological conditions, in this case flowering, are unknown. Individual 'case studies' such as this add to the reliable body of horticultural knowledge. Eventually there will be enough natural history to launch a doctoral dissertation that will address the specific mechanisms of bamboo flowering.