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Home
Research
Information
People
Courses
History

The Fries Family of Botanists

Elias Fries (1794-1878) was a pupil of A. J. Retzius and C. A. Agardh. In 1814, Fries became associate professor (docent) in botany at the University of Lund. He moved to Uppsala University in 1834, first as professor of Practical Economy but from 1851 as professor of Systematic Botany when he also became head of the botanical garden and herbarium. In 1839 and again 1853-54, Fries served as Rector Magnificus of the university.

Fries was especially devoted to the study of fungi, but his research soon included every aspect of botany. With regard to higher systematics of fungi, he became one of the most important researchers ever with a profound influence up to the present day. Among his best known works are the "Systema Mycologicum" (1821-1832), "Elenchus Fungorum" (1828), and "Hymenomyces Europaei" (1874). In lichenology Fries also produced a work of fundamental importance, "Lichenographia Europaea Reformata".

For him, a central problem was the creation of a natural system comprising the entire plant kingdom. He was one of the most dedicated advocates of the "idealistic morphology" and as such skeptic to Darwin's ideas. This, however, did not stop him from presenting theories about a "general development" of all living organisms. Elias Fries is known as the Father of Mycology.

Elias Fries' descendants include a long line of well-known and well-reputed botanists including:

- Thore M. Fries (1832-1913) son of the preceding. Professor of Botany and Practical Economy at Uppsala University 1877-1899. Rector Magnificus 1893-1899. Thore undertook many field trips in Europe, Greenland, and Newfoundland, participating in one of the two arctic expeditions led by A. E. Nordenskiöld. He started to work in lichenology where "Lichenographia Scandinavica" 1871-74 is outstanding. Around 1880 his interest shifted to the history of botany, particularly Linnaeus, of whom he published a classic biography in 1903 "Linné: Lefnadsteckning".
- Robert E. Fries (1876-1966) son of the preceding. Professor Bergianus at the Bergius Foundation in Stockholm and head of its garden, Bergianska trädgården. He published works on mycology, plant geography, and systematics.
- Thore C. E. Fries (1886-1930) son of Thore M. Robert's brother. Professor of Systematic Botany at Lund University. At first he mainly studied lichenology but later turned to plant geography. As such he became one of the pioneers and leaders in the area of plant sociology. Thore C. E. travelled in India and Africa and died during a field trip to the Capland and Rhodesia.
- Magnus Fries (1917-1987) son of Robert, grandson of Thore M. and great grandson of Elias. Professor at the Swedish National Museum of Natural History. Magnus worked with pollen-analysis and as author of several works in plant geography and vegetational history. He was also instrumental in publishing Eric Hultén's Atlas of the North European Vascular Plants North of the Tropic of Cancer in 1986.
- Nils Fries (1912-1994) nephew of Thore M. and Robert. Professor of Physiological and Anatomical Botany at Uppsala University. He was devoted to studies of derived fungal groups and their sexual reproduction.

You can read more about [Elias Fries](#) (written by Swedish museum of Natural History, in Swedish) and see his [Fungus plates](#) (the same site, in English or Swedish).