

# Alberto Castellanos (1896-1968)

Many thanks to **Héloisa Castellanos** and her brother **Roberto** for the authorization to reproduce the articles of their parents.

## Genera et Species Plantarum Argentinarum - Cactaceae

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*Genera et Species Plantarum Argentinarum*, was published from 1943 to 1956. It was conceived as a replica of the old and monumental monographies of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century like those of Lemaire, de Candolle and Redouté, Pfeiffer and Otto, etc. It was designed in the institute for biological studies named *Instituto Lillo*, Tucumán, and directed by Horacio Raúl Descole.

This is a chapter of the first volume (1943) of the series of heavy books (50×35 cm, up to 10kg/volume) made of 120 pages of text (spanish), 30 plates (some colored), 13 pages of B&W photos, 2 pages of maps. The second author of this chapter is Herminia Violeta Lelong, the wife of Alberto Castellanos.

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### Some historical details about the book:

*Instituto Lillo* was the private house of Miguel Lillo (1862-1931) a rich and solitary man who made an extensive collection of plants from northwestern Argentina, and also got a great number of botanical (and non botanical) books. His house and other landed properties were legated to the *Universidad de Tucumán*, and managed by the *Fundación Miguel Lillo* up to now.

As part of the University, the *Instituto Lillo* kicked off in 1937. The activity was incredible, with the incorporation of a great staff, both of scientists and technicians. It was not devoted only to botany: zoology and geology were also considered. The Institute quickly became the most important botanical research centre of Argentina at that time, and has up to now the biggest herbarium of the country.

Horacio Descole (1910-1984) was the director of the botanic department of the natural history museum of Tucumàn in 1937. He founded the *Lilloa* journal and became the director of the *Instituto Lillo* in 1942. He had the ability to contact important people of the government, getting funds for the University and *Instituto Lillo* projects. This certainly helped the production of the series *Genera et Species Plantarum Argentinarum*. He was a personal friend of Miguel Miranda, Minister of Economy of Juan Perón who was President of Argentina for 8.5 years (1946-1952). The career of Descole was affected by his participation in the Peronist party: he resigned from *Instituto Lillo* in 1955 (Perón ousting) and left Tucumàn; he came back at the head of *Instituto Lillo* in 1973 (Perón come-back), and was fired in 1976 (military coup d'état).

One of Descole professional relations in the argentinean botanical community was Dr. Alberto Castellanos, who was working in the *Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Buenos Aires*, and Professor at the Buenos Aires University. He was specialized in taxonomy of Cactaceae and Bromeliaceae. He contributed on both families in the "genera plantarum", enlarging previous papers and adding luxurious color plates and photos, and he also collaborated at several other minor families.

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