

**VALENTINA YAKOVLEVNA CHERDANTSEVA,
THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL BRYOLOGIST IN THE RUSSIAN FAR
EAST**



Valentina Yakovlevna Cherdantseva was born on the 15th of August 1939 in a family of a worker who had moved to Vladivostok a year before. Her parents moved here due to a combination of circumstances: coming from their relatives, who lived in Kamchatka, to Irkutsk in 1938, the family had a delay at the Vladivostok Rail Way Station for more than a month because there were no tickets. As Valentina's parents told her later: they were staying in a spontaneous camp of people longing to leave, which had spread near the Station, and after a month of waiting, on one common day, an engager from the works "Metallist", which was well-known in the Far East at that time, walked into their camp and was offering temporary jobs. So, having accepted the offer to earn some fortuitous pay, the father had found a new motherland for himself and his family and gave the Far East a first professional bryologist – Valentina Yakovlevna Cherdantseva (she was an Ardeeva before she married).

Raised in a quiet, at that time, area of Vladivostok, near the coasts of the Amur Bay, Valentina has been always interested in plants since her very childhood, and therefore it was quite natural that she decided to apply to a newly opened biological department of the Far-Eastern National University (FENU). Having successfully past the exams in 1956, she was enrolled, and in 1961 she graduated from the FENU with a diploma of "Biologist-botanist". Right after her graduation from the university, as an active and promising student she was offered

a job at the sub-department of plant taxonomy and plant sociology of the Biological department. Valentina had worked at the university for 5 years – from 1961 till 1965, first as a laboratory assistant, and then as an Assistant Lecturer. However, almost half a century ago, just like today, the duties of a lecturer used to consume a lot of time and strength and left almost no opportunity for scientific research activities, which young Valentina aspired to.

In 1965, the fortune smiled on the keen researcher and on just a pretty lady. A talented mycologist, a founder of the Laboratory of Lower Plants in the Institute of Biology and Soil Science, Dr. Lubov' Nikolayevna Vasilyeva invited her to apply for post-graduate studies and offered her to do the research on mosses – a group of plants that was extremely insufficiently known in the Far East at that time. Valentina accepted the offer and started to work hard on the issue. Besides Lubov' N. Vasilyeva, her second post-graduate thesis scientific advisor was one of the patriarchs of the domestic bryology – Leonid Vladimirovich Bardunov. By the way, the latter was also born and used to leave in Vladivostok, but had to move to study in Irkutsk (at that time the Far-Eastern National University had no biology department at all) and decided to stay there for good. Close communication between Leonid V. Bardunov and Valentina kept on going until the very death of Leonid V. Bardunov. A great number of publications devoted to the moss flora of the Russian Far East were written by these two scientists in collaboration.

Thus, in 1965, Valentina entered the internal post-graduate school of the Institute of Biology and Soil Science of the Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences which she graduated from in 1968. In 1970, she made a presentation and successfully defended her Ph.D. degree. The thesis was titled “Mosses of South Sakhalin”. Owing to her studies, the number of species known from Sakhalin more than doubled. In 1968, she was taken on the staff at the Institute of Biology and Soil Science as a Junior Research Fellow, and since 1979 she was promoted to a Senior Researcher. In 1990, she was awarded the academic status of Senior Fellow in Botany.

For the time she has worked at the Institute of Biology and Soil Science, Valentina has traveled almost all over the Russian Far East, having been to the Amur, Sakhalin, and Magadan Regions, in the Khabarovsky, Primorsky and Kamchatsky Territories (Krais) and the Jewish Autonomous Region. During this period of time she has collected more than 30000 voucher specimens, which formed the basis of the bryological section of the Herbarium of the Institute of Biology and Soil Science (VLA). Most part of the collections has been mounted (properly packaged, labeled and registered) and is stored in perfect order, due to the efforts of Valentina Yakovlevna.

As Valentina tells, the work of a flora investigator includes three constituents: the first and her most favorite thing to do is material collecting, on the second place she counts the specimen identification, and the third one is article writing. Despite the fact that article writing is her least favorite thing to do, her achievements in that are more than substantial. Today she is an author of 114 publications and, taking into account her high creative activity, she has all chances to substantially increase this list. The most important Valentina's publications were

on the moss flora of the southern Kuril Islands (1982) and the mosses of the south of the Primorsky Territory (1982), both were written in co-authorship with Dr. Bardunov. For the last decade, Valentina has been keeping on publishing papers that cover various issues of flora, phytogeography and taxonomy of mosses.

Valentina's personality characterized with mild nature, modesty and exceptional honesty. The people that work with her cannot remember a single case, when she would speak badly of people (even if they deserved that). It is very comfortable and easy to work with Valentina. One of the authors of the paper has moved in Vladivostok, mostly, due to his desire to work together with Valentina Yakovlevna, another one is her ex post-graduate student.

Today, Valentina is a senior among the actively working bryologists of Russia. Her energy, enthusiasm and perseverance know no limits. Even not feeling well, in rough weather, Valentina still finds strength to come to the institute and to do the research and that is not only on working days, but also on weekends. When on a field trip she never seeks for excuses neither in her knowledge nor in her age, and works equally with others, and sometimes even better than others. In 2006 at the age of 67 she climbed Mt. Olkhovaya (1660 m alt.) for 5 hours, leaving behind some younger colleagues, and as soon as she reached the summit she immediately began to explore and collect mosses, and she did so till the very evening.

We wish Valentina Ya. Cherdantseva to maintain her creativity and activity as well as sound health for many years to come.

Success in your research and love from your close ones, dear Valentina Yakovlevna.

Vadim A. Bakalin & Konstantin V. Gorobets