

OBITUARY

EDUARDO JOSÉ DOS SANTOS MOREIRA MENDES (1924–2011)

On 24 September 2011, Eduardo Mendes (Figure 1) passed away at his home in Lisbon, Portugal, at the grand old age of 86—just 2 months short of his 87th birthday—following a stroke. He was one of the last of a generation of colonial plant taxonomists who had expertise on the flora of Angola and some of the other former African colonies of Portugal, and his passing signifies the end of an era.

Eduardo José dos Santos Moreira Mendes was born in Lisbon on 26 November 1924. He studied in Lisbon and obtained his first degree in biological sciences in 1946 at the University of Lisbon where he studied under the tutelage of, among others, the renowned cytogeneticist, Prof. Flávio Resende, who had a special interest in southern African petaloid monocots, including aloes and their kin (Smith & Figueiredo 2011a). Mendes was a botany lecturer at the University of Lisbon from 1946 to 1954, where he taught courses in the Faculties of Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Medicine. During that period he developed a research programme on cryptogams, and published several papers on this group. In 1954 he was employed as assistant to the project ‘Missão Botânica de Angola e Moçambique’ and in 1956 became a researcher at the Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, later superseded by the Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (IICT). From 1974 to 1986, Mendes was Director of the Centro de Botânica of the IICT, in Lisbon, Portugal. While Director of the Centro, he used an interesting way of summoning staff to his office: a switch on his desk was connected to a bell that

rang in the Instituto’s corridors and each staff member had a Morse code-style code that, when sounded, meant that he or she must immediately go to the Director’s office (Martins 1994).

Throughout his career Mendes maintained an interest in the floras of Angola and Mozambique, and did considerable work on these. He revised several families for the *Conspectus florum angolensis*; publishing a series of papers under the title ‘Additiones et Adnotationes Florae Angolensis’ that continued until 1973. He further revised several families for the *Flora zambesiaca* in a set of papers under the series entitled ‘Additiones et Adnotationes Florae Mozambicanae’. During his career he published over 70 papers and was editor or co-editor of *Conspectus florum angolensis*, *Flora zambesiaca*, *Flora de Moçambique*, and *Garcia de Orta, Série Botânica*.

Mendes participated in two botanical expeditions to Angola, during which he collected several thousand herbarium accessions (Figure 2). The first expedition that Mendes undertook to Angola took place from September 1955 to March 1956 and focused mostly on the southwestern parts of the country, where he collected 1 750 numbers (Figure 3). The second expedition took place between December 1959 and May 1960, mostly in the southeastern region, between Cuvango and Cuito-Cuanavale, and resulted in the numbers 1 800 to 4 064 in Mendes’s African collection (Mendes 1980; Martins 1994).



FIGURE 1.—Eduardo Mendes (26 November 1924–24 September 2011) at his home in Lisbon, Portugal. Photograph: Gideon F. Smith, 23 September 2010.

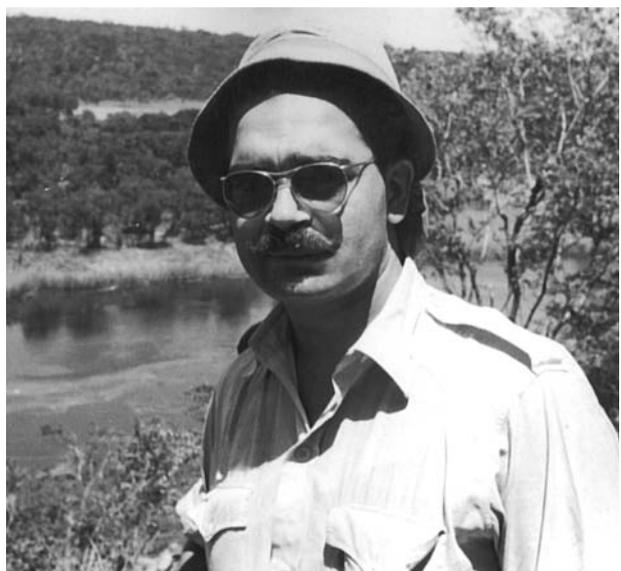


FIGURE 2.—A young, mustachioed Eduardo Mendes photographed in Angola during the first of the two expeditions he undertook to the country. Photographer unknown. Reproduced courtesy of the Mendes family, Lisbon, Portugal.



FIGURE 3.—A series of tents pitched around the field collecting vehicle served as shelter during the first of the expeditions that Mendes undertook to Angola. Photograph: Eduardo Mendes. Reproduced with the permission of the Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisbon, Portugal.

After his retirement from the Centro de Botânica, Mendes disappeared from the botanical landscape. Two of the authors (GFS and EF) visited him at his home on 23 September 2010 to obtain information on the provenance of the material on which the name *Aloe mendesii* Reynolds (Asphodelaceae), a cliff-dwelling species from Angola, was based. He was very helpful and vividly remembered the material, including when and where it was collected and what happened to it—quite remarkably—over 55 years ago! However, Mendes sadly passed away one week before the resulting paper appeared in print (Smith & Figueiredo 2011b).

The work and collections of Mendes remain little known in South Africa as he never collected in the country as far as we could ascertain, and was therefore not included in Gunn & Codd's (1981) benchmark work on the botanical exploration of southern Africa, and was only briefly mentioned in Figueiredo & Smith (2008). However, his collecting activities in Angola contributed significantly to the primary botanical knowledge of that country, and some of the specimens that he collected

decades ago are still being used as the types of new plant names. Sousa *et al.* (2010), for example, recently described *Cyphostemma mendesii* F.Sousa in the Vitaceae based on some of Mendes's Angolan material. Thirteen further taxa were described from, and named for, Eduardo Mendes from collections he made in Angola. Eleven are currently accepted, including the distinctive succulent tree *Euphorbia eduardoi* L.C.Leach, *Uvaria mendesii* Paiva, *Ceropegia mendesii* Stopp, *Phyllanthus mendesii* Brunel ex Radcl.-Sm., *Adenodolichos mendesii* Torre, *Crotalaria mendesii* Torre, *Indigofera mendesii* Torre, *Vigna mendesii* Torre, *Rothea mendesii* (R.Fern.) R.Fern., and *Aloe mendesii* Reynolds.

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G.F. SMITH*, E. FIGUEIREDO** and
L. CATARINO***

* Office of the Chief Director: Biosystematics Research & Biodiversity Collections, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Private Bag X101, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa / H.G.W.J. Schweickerdt Herbarium, Department of Plant Science, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002 South Africa / Centre for Functional Ecology, Departamento de Ciências da Vida, Universidade de Coimbra, 3001-455 Coimbra, Portugal. Email: g.smith@sanbi.org.za.

** Department of Botany, P.O.Box 77000, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, 6031 South Africa / Centre for Functional Ecology, Departamento de Ciências da Vida, Universidade de Coimbra, 3001-455 Coimbra, Portugal Email: estrelafigueiredo@hotmail.com.

*** Jardim Botânico Tropical, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Trav. Conde da Ribeira 9, 1300-142 Lisboa, Portugal. Email: lmfcatarino@gmail.com.