



Botanical Society of America  
P.O. Box 299  
St. Louis, MO 63166-0299  
www.botany.org

9 August 2019

Office of the President  
213A Roudebush Hall  
Miami University  
Oxford, Ohio 45056

Dear President Crawford:

On behalf of the Botanical Society of America (BSA) and its approximately 3000 members, the Board of Directors of the BSA respectfully requests that the Miami University administration seriously reconsider the revocation of tenure of Dr. Daniel Gladish and the termination of his and Mr. Brian Grubb's employment. Two centuries of collective experience among the BSA Directors signing this letter compel us to call out this action as severe and unnecessarily harsh regarding the cultivation of a living plant specimen in the Hamilton Conservatory.

The plant in question, *Tabernanthe iboga* (L.) Nutt., more commonly known as iboga, is an obscure species native to Africa, but one with potential medicinal use. There is an obvious distinction between a chemical compound with a psychoactive effect on humans (ibogaine) and the plant itself. Additionally, it is important to note that just because a plant-derived compound is considered a controlled substance by the DEA, this does not automatically require that the plant be treated as one-and-the-same. For example, it is legal to grow opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.) throughout the United States as an ornamental or garden flower; however, it is not legal to grow it with the intent to isolate and purify the powerful narcotics in its milky sap. In the case of *T. iboga* at Miami University, it is apparent that there was no intent to produce or even conduct laboratory research on ibogaine. Instead the goal was to display this interesting tropical plant and to educate students, staff, and conservatory visitors about it.

Conservatories, botanic gardens, and university greenhouses are primary educational resources for students and the botanical community. Medicinal and poisonous plants are frequently cultivated and displayed at public facilities. These living collections strive to highlight plant diversity and to educate students and the general public. In many cases, they are a conservation back-stop for plants that are increasingly in danger of extinction. This is all the more important because people the world over rely on plants for the treatment of illnesses and for pain relief. More than 28,000 plant species have known medicinal uses, and more than 80% of the world's population continues to rely on plants and plant extracts for healthcare. In Western medicine, plants remain incredibly important with more than 50% of the top 150 prescription drugs in the United States alone derived from plants or synthesized from the chemical models provided by plants.

To attempt to terminate someone who has devoted his career to botanical education when the offense is promotion of biological diversity, wherein legality of



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said possession is not clearly determined, is in our opinion unethical and unacceptable. We suggest that a more appropriate response would be to require that Dr. Gladish and Mr. Grubb, as staff members responsible for the Conservatory, be tasked with developing and implementing policies acceptable to the university that protect and secure all plants of special interest housed in the collection, in consultation with officers of the BSA and other academic institutions.

In sum, with respect and with full understanding of the responsibilities incumbent upon your position, we request that these draconian actions be reconsidered. They are out of proportion given all that we know about the nature of this incident. They are also not in alignment with the principles of academic freedom or the advancement of knowledge and education.

Respectfully,

Linda Watson, President  
Professor  
Oklahoma State University

Andrea Wolfe, Past President  
Professor  
The Ohio State University

Cynthia Jones, Pres. Elect  
Professor & Curator  
EEB Biodiversity  
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Professor, Claremont Graduate University

xc: Provost of Miami University; Miami Chapter of AAUP