

# Carl Johan Fredrik Skottsberg (1880 – 1963)

Carl Skottsberg, the son of Carl Adolf Skottsberg and Maria Louisa Pfeiffer, was born on 1 December 1880 in Karlshamn, southern Sweden, where his father was head of the secondary school. After matriculating in 1898 Carl studied at the University of Uppsala. He participated as botanist in the Swedish Antarctic expedition (1901–1903) led by Otto Nordenskjöld. When the ship was wrecked in February 1903, crew and expedition members were forced to overwinter on Paulet Island before being rescued. Although many of his specimens were lost, Skottsberg wrote up his findings, received his doctorate and was appointed lecturer at the university in 1907. He headed south again, leading the Swedish Magellan expedition to Patagonia (1907–1909), and in the Juan Fernandez Islands saw what was probably the last living *Santalum fernandezianum* – a tree cut to extinction for its aromatic wood. These expeditions established his reputation as a taxonomist, and aroused his abiding interest in geographical distribution.

In 1909 he married Inga Margareta, daughter of Anna Brunou and Professor Jonatan Reute, a Swedish family living in Helsingfors, Finland. They were to have two sons and a daughter. In 1909 also, he became curator of the botanical museum at Uppsala. In 1915 he was commissioned to plan the botanical garden for the city of Gothenburg, and in 1919 was appointed its director. He held the position for 29 years, while also travelling the globe, collecting plants for the garden, studying the vegetation, and writing more than 200 papers. Ingar accompanied him on several collecting trips, and in *The Phanerogams of the Juan Fernandez Islands* he thanked her “for her never-failing enthusiasm and her self-sacrifice during a voyage that was a great strain on body and mind alike”, and wrote that “she was a most skilful, active and cheerful companion, and contributed largely to the good results of our survey”.

Skottsberg was professor of botany at the University of Gothenburg from 1931 until his retirement in 1947, and was also a conservationist – Juan Fernandez was declared a national park in 1935, largely due to his efforts. He was a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and several other Swedish learned societies, and in 1950 was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. He was awarded Linnean Society medals in 1958 and 1959, and at the time of his death at Gothenburg on 14 June 1963 he was an honorary or corresponding member of at least 31 scientific societies worldwide.

In 1938 Professor Skottsberg visited New Zealand to see the southern beech forests, study astelias and meet our botanists. Lucy Cranwell was invited to join his 1938 Hawaiian bog survey, and as a long-time admirer of Leonard Cockayne’s work, he also opened the Cockayne Memorial Garden in the Christchurch Botanic Garden. He visited again in 1949, on the occasion of the Seventh Pacific Science Congress. Among many plant genera and species named in his honour is a New Zealand endemic, *Astelia skottsbergii*, a flax-like plant described in 1966 by Lucy Moore from a 1964 collection by Isobel Morice, who is also commemorated in the *Astelia* genus (*Astelia nivicola* var. *moriceae*).



## ***Astelia skottsbergii***

*Astelia* ('lacking a stem') contains about 25 species distributed around the Pacific Ocean but centred in New Zealand, where seven of the 13 species reach the alpine zone. All plants are unisexual. *Astelia skottsbergii* grows in colonies of stout tufts, resembling small *Phormium* plants in habit and texture. Young leaves are light bluish-green with white scales standing erect from the upper surface; older ones are glabrous on both surfaces and die to reddish-brown. The closely packed flowers are greenish, and the fruit orange. It is confined to western Nelson between Mt Arthur and the Paparoa Range, in snow tussock grasslands and on rocky bluffs.

