

Victor Dmitrievich Zotov (1908 – 1977)

Born in Vladivostok, Russia, on 16 November 1908, Victor Dmitrievich Zotov (Zotoff) immigrated to New Zealand in 1924 with his parents Dmitry Nikitich Zotoff and Olga Ivanovna Mikulovskaya. They settled in Bunnythorpe in the Manawatu, where his father took up farming, and from 1925 to 1927 Victor attended Feilding Agricultural High School. The principal L J Wild and English master H H Allan encouraged Victor's interest in botany, and the results of his project on clover were recorded in the school bulletin. In 1927 and 1928, with G V Wild, he received a research grant to study sexuality in *Coprosma*, and their resulting paper was published in 1930.

In August 1928, when Allan was appointed systematic botanist at the Plant Research Station in Palmerston North, Zotov became his assistant. With the reorganisation of the station in 1936 to form the Plant Research Bureau within the DSIR, he became part of the new botany section (later Division), which moved to Wellington the following year, to Christchurch in 1953 and finally to Lincoln in May 1960. On 9 February 1937, at Palmerston North, he married Alice Elizabeth Taylor; they were to have three children. Zotov was an enthusiastic trumper and member of the Tararua and Manawatu tramping clubs, and during his early years at DSIR his major research (much of it in his spare time) was on the vegetation of the Tararuas. His joint paper in 1938 with Norman Elder, Andrew Beddie, George Sainsbury and Amy Hodgson, which included moss and liverwort species, as well as ferns and flowering plants, is considered the most comprehensive early botanical study of the region.

In the early 1930s he began studying the taxonomy of grasses, which became his major research work in later years. In 1936 he contributed drawings to Allan's *Introduction to the Grasses of New Zealand*, and then published his own work on tussock grasslands (1938) and taxonomy (1943). His MSc thesis from Victoria University College in 1945 was on the genus *Danthonia*. As well as regular field work, he took part in the New Zealand-American Fiordland expedition in 1949, went overseas for seven months in 1955 to examine botanical collections, especially of grasses, in Washington, London and Paris, and in January 1961 was a member of the Campbell Island expedition. His published papers reflect these and other interests and concerns, including the destruction of indigenous vegetation, trials for wartime rubber production and potholing of limestone. He was active in several scientific societies and a vice-president of the Wellington Botanical Society.

Victor Zotov worked in Botany Division until his formal retirement in 1968 and then for a period on the temporary staff. Predeceased by his wife in 1976, he died suddenly on 26 May 1977 in Christchurch, survived by his daughter Natalia and sons Dmitri and Nicolai. In a 1959 revision of the hooked sedge genus *Uncinia*, Dominion Museum botanist Bruce Hamlin (1929-1976) described a new species, naming it *Uncinia zotovii*. (At DSIR's Botany Division in Wellington Hamlin had worked as trainee assistant to Victor Zotov). More recently, in 1998, Edgar and Connor proposed *Zotovia*, a new generic name for three alpine species, "in commemoration of Victor Dmitrievich Zotov, and of his contribution to the taxonomy of New Zealand grasses".



Uncinia zotovii

Uncinia (Latin *uncus* 'hook') is a genus of 50–60 species found in Australasia, New Guinea, South and Central America, with around 30 endemic to New Zealand. They are grass-like plants characterised by ripe heads that readily attach their seeds to passing animals, hairy legs and clothing by tiny projecting hooks. *Uncinia zotovii* forms yellow-green tufts, typically with only a few shoots and culms which angle out sideways, but sometimes more densely leafy and erect. The leaves are rather soft and narrow abruptly to almost canoe-shaped tips. The spike is broader near the tip than the base, the male portion short. Distributed throughout most of New Zealand in mid-altitude forest, it favours well-drained, moist soils.

