

Alexgeorgia: recognizing a botanical legacy through a distinctive genus

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Alexgeorgia is a genus in the Restionaceae family (also commonly known as restiads) and native to Australia. Alexgeorgia is distinctive in that the female flowers of these plants are invisible for most of the year, the flowers borne below the surface of the sand, with only the styles appearing inconspicuously above the ground and soon wilting. Sherwin Carlquist (1931 - 2021), perhaps one of the most influential botanists of our time, described the genus and two species in the Australian Journal of Botany in 1976. Carlquist, who passed away this last December, made significant contributions in plant systematics, wood anatomy, evolutionary and ecological theory, and island biogeography, and published prolifically on these subjects, with over 300 publications over the course of his distinguished career. The specimen chosen for the Specimen Spotlight is the holotype for Alexgeorgia subterranea to highlight this amazingly unusual plant and pay tribute to the botanical legacy of Sherwin Carlquist.

