SPECIES DIVERSITY OF THE PLANTS FOUND IN THE ROMAN-CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX CEMETERIES (FROM THE MEHALA NEIGHBOURHOOD) AND THE HEROES CEMETERY FROM TIMISOARA

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Abstract. *Cemeteries are a source of history and culture, as well as of nature. Their role is to insure a place for funeral, commemoration, memorial, but they can also function as green spaces, quiet, proper for relaxation, contemplation, nature communion. They must be planned, managed and maintained in proper architectural and ecologic parameters. Anthropic activities characteristic to the microclimate determine their scientific point of interest, especially regarding the flora they shelter. However, they are less studied from this perspective, and more from the point of view of culture and history. The paper represents an inventory of the main plant species found in three cemeteries in Timisoara. We are discussing 143 species, belonging to 60 botanic families, most of them ornamental, but also numerous weed plants. Species used for decoration are quite common: tulips, heartsease, carnations, lilies, daffodils, irises, peonies, lilies of the valley, petunias, primroses, lavender, chrysanthemum, geranium, sage, forget-me-nots, marigolds. The paper also deals with the overall aspect of these cemeteries. Thus, we have observed the obvious tendency to plate graves. The ones where flowers are planted are protected by tree bark or ornamental stone. The spaces between graves are very narrow, and are not properly maintained. There are many graves grown over by weed. There are few woody species. There is an unwelcome presence of artificial ornamental elements. Certain rules for plant species arrangements on graves should be respected, as well as finding methods to encourage the caretaking of these settlements, so as to obtain a pleasant aesthetic aspect.*

Key words: *biodiversity, flora, floristic compositions, cemeteries*

INTRODUCTION

Developed countries as well as in developing countries are going through an alarming period due to population growth, rapid urbanization and environmental degradation of the urban areas, as well as the rural ones. Thus, new approaches to and terms in the everyday field, which shall lead to finding solutions for the current problems, take priority on the agenda of city planners, managers and designers.

A lot of similar expressions, such as „green movement", „ ecologic development", „green urbanization" are more and more frequently used in the discourse regarding the minimization of environment degradation in various fields.

Cemeteries are probably the most interesting surfaces in this context. As inevitable city land use forms, cemeteries should be planned, managed and maintained with ecologic approaches so as to protect the environment.

The main preoccupations after planning and designing cemeteries include: the grave type, selecting the funeral area, soil type, landscape design (e.g. plant selection) and landscape maintenance (e.g. weed control, fertilization).

The main role of each cemetery is to offer a space where dead people are buried and commemorated, and to constitute a focal point for mourning and fulfilling religious rites. However, since it offers green oases in often polluted areas, cemeteries also represent resting and contemplation places in a broader sense, offering opportunities for fresh air, or just a quite place to communicate with nature around us.

The co-existence of nature and art in cemeteries represents a great part of their character and turns them into a unique historical, cultural and natural resource. This is the reason why cemeteries are often regarded as research objects by cultural and historic patrimony researchers.

Taking into consideration the significant impact of human activity in cemeteries, the microclimate and soil characteristics of these areas, which are essential for plants, one may observe that specific flora stations are created in cemeteries. Despite all these, research of the cemetery flora, the speedy natural introduction of invasive plants, the geo-spatial cemetery distribution as well as that of adjacent territories in Romania and around the world are relatively poorly explored.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The species inventory was carried out in the Heroes Cemetery, the Orthodox and the Roman-Catholic Cemeteries in Mehala. During the period 2014-2015, various trips to these locations were carried out for the species inventory, as well as the observation of their ecology.

For the species identification we used „Flora ilustrată a României" [Romania's Illustrated Flora] (CIOCÂRLAN 2009), „Flora României" [Romania's Flora] vol. I-XII (SĂVULESCU 1952-1976), „Plante vasculare din România" [Vascular Plants in Romania] (SÂRBU *et al*., 2013), ornamental plant encyclopaedias. The studied species denomination is in accordance with The Plant List. For efficiency, the species are ordered in families using the alphabetical criteria. The following are discussed: botanic family participation with species, the presence of some dangerous species, with invasive potential, and some aspects regarding the main species symbolism. The diversity was appreciated overall, and per grave. We also present, in the form of recommendations, flower arrangement principles for decorations and floristic composition elements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The total number of inventoried species is 143. As was expected, the number of botanic families they pertain to is large, 60 families, while their participation with species is reduced. Of the 60 botanic family total, 10 account for almost half of the species number: *Asteraceae* (18), *Liliaceae, Poaceae, Ranunculaceae* (6 species each), *Lamiaceae, Cupressaceae* (5 species / family), *Fabaceae, Rosaceae, Saxifragaceae* (4). The most part of the families is monospecific. In the following, we present the floristic inventory:

Fam. *Amaranthaceae*

1. *Amaranthus retroflexus* L., T, L9, Tx, U4, Rx, N9
2. *Celosia spicata* Spreng.

Fam *Amaryllidaceae*

3. *Leucojum vernum* L., G, L6, T5, U7, R6, N7, Centr. Eur.
4. *Narcissus poeticus* L., G, L8, T5, U6, R5, Nx, Centr. Eur.
5. *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* L.

Fam *Anacardiaceae*

6. *Cotinus coggygria* Scop., Ph, L7, T8, U3, R7, Nx, Pont.-Medit.

Fam. *Apiaceae*

7. *Anethum graveolens* L.
8. *Conium maculatum* L., T-Ht, L8, T6, U6, Rx, N8, Euras.
9. *Sanicula europaea* L., H, L4,Tx, U5, Rx, N6, Euras.

Fam. *Apocynaceae*

10. *Vinca minor* L., L4, T6, U5, Rx, N6, Centr. Eur.- medit.

Fam. *Araliaceae*

11. *Hedera helix* L., Ph, L4, T6, U5, Rx, Nx, Atl.-Medit.

Fam. *Asteraceae*

12. *Achillea clypeolata* Sibth. et Sm.
13. *Ageratum houstonianum* Miller
14. *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* L., T, L9, T6, U4, R7, N6, Adv. Am de N
15. *Arctium lappa* L, H, L8, Tx, U5, R7, N9, Euras.
16. *Bellis perennis* L., H, L8, Tx, Ux, Rx, N5, Eur.
17. *Calendula officinalis* L., T-Ht, Medit.
18. *Chrysanthemum indicum* L.
19. *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* L.
20. *Cirsium arvense* L., G, L8, Tx, Ux, Rx, N7, Euras.
21. *Conyza canadensis* L., T, Am de S
22. *Gaillardia aristata* Pursh.
23. *Gazania splendens* E.G. et A. Henderson
24. *Lactuca serriola* L., T-Ht, L9, T^, U4, Rx, N4, Euras.
25. *Picris hieracioides* L., Ht-H
26. *Santolina chamaecyparissus* L.
27. *Stenactis annua* L., T, Ht, H, M, Mez. Adv., Am. de N
28. *Taraxacum officinale* Fam. Asteraceae, Weber, H, L7, Tx, U5, Rx N7, Euras.
29. *Tagetes patula* L.
30. *Xanthium strumarium* L., T, L8, T6, U5, Rx, N6, Adv, Am. de S

Fam. *Begoniaceae*

31. *Begonia semperflorens* Link & Otto

Fam. *Bignoniaceae*

32. *Catalpa bignonioides* Walter

Fam. *Boraginaceae*

33. *Echium vulgare* L., Ht, L9, Tx, U3, Rx, N4, Euras
34. *Myosotis scorpioides* L.

Fam. *Brassicaceae*

35. *Cardaria draba* L., H, L8, T7, U3, R7, N4, Euras. Medit.
36. *Cheiranthus cheiri* L., T-H, Medit.
37. *Iberis umbellata* L.

Fam. *Buxaceae*

38. Buxus sempervirens L.
Fam. *Cannabaceae*
39. *Humulus lupulus* L., H, L7, T6, U8, R6, N8, Euras., Am. de N.
Fam. *Cannaceae*
40. Canna indica L.
Fam. *Caprifoliaceae*
41. Lonicera japonica Thumb.
42. *Sambucus ebulus* L., H, L8, T6, U5, R7, N7, Euras.
Fam. *Caryophyllaceae*
43. Cerastium tomentosum L.
44. Dianthus barbatus L., Ch.
45. Dianthus carthusianorum L., H, L8, T5, U4, R5, N0, Eur.
46. Dianthus caryophyllus L.
47. Lychnis coronaria Desr.
48. *Silene alba* Mill., L8, Tx, U4, Rx, N7
Fam. *Celastraceae*
49. Euonymus fortunei Hand.- Mazz.
Fam. *Ceratopyllaceae*
50. *Thalictrum aquilegiifolium* L., H, L5, Tx, U8, R7, N8, Eur.
Fam. *Chenopodiaceae*
51. *Chenopodium album* L., T, Lx, Tx, U4, Rx, N7
Fam. *Crassulaceae*
52. Crassula ovata Miller
Fam. *Commelinaceae*
53. *Tradescantia virginiana* L., Am de N
54. Tradescantia zebrina (Schinz.) Hunt.
Fam. *Convolvulaceae*
55. *Convolvulus arvensis* L., G(H), L7, Tx, U4, Rx, Nx, Cosm.
56. Convolvulus tricolor L.
Fam. *Crassulaceae*
57. *Sedum acre* L., H, L8, T5, U1, Rx, N1, Euras.
58. Sedum spectabile L.
59. *Sempervivum tectorum* L., Ch, Eur. Mont.
Fam. *Cupressaceae*
60. Chamaecyparis lawsoniana (A. Murray) Parl.
61. Cupressus sempervirens L.
62. *Juniperus communis* L., Ph, L8, Tx, U4, Rx, Nx, Circ.
63. Thuja occidentalis L.
64. Thuja orientalis L.
Fam. *Ericaceae*
65. Erica gracilis J.C. Wendl.
Fam. *Euphobiaceae*
66. Euphorbia myrsinites L., H., L9, T7, U1, R8, Medit.
Fam. *Fabaceae*
67. Albizia julibrissin Durazz.
68. Coronilla varia L.

69. Lathyrus tuberosus L.
70. Lupinus polyphyllus Lindl., H, Am. De N

Fam. *Fagaceae*

71. *Quercus robur* L., Ph, L6,T6, Ux, Rx, Nx, Eur.

Fam. *Fumariaceae*

72. *Fumaria officinalis* L., T, L6, Tx, U5, R7, N7, Eur.

Fam. *Geraniaceae*

73. Pelargonium zonale L.

Fam. *Iridaceae*

74. *Iris germanica* 'Florentina' L., G, Est Medit.

Fam *Juglandaceae*

75. *Juglans regia* L., Ph, Centr. Eur.- Balc.- Cauc.

Fam. *Lamiaceae*

76. Coleus blumei Benth.
77. *Lamium purpureum* L., T, L7, Tx, U5, Rx, Nx, Euras.
78. Lavandula angustifolia Mill.
79. Salvia splendens Sellow
80. Stachys lanata Moench.

Fam. *Liliaceae*

81. Asparagus racemosus Willd.
82. Chlorophytum comosum (Thunb.) Jacques
83. Hemerocalis fulva L.
84. Hyacinthus orientalis L.
85. Lilium candidum L.
86. *Muscari comosum* L., G, L7, T6, U3, R7, Nx, Eur.
*87. Ornithogallum thyrsoides (*Jacq.) Endl.
88. Tulipa gesneriana L.
89. Yucca filamentosa L.

Fam. *Linaceae*

90. *Linum perene* L., H, L7, T6, U3, R7, N2, Euras. Cont.

Fam. *Magnoliaceae*

91. Magnolia kobus DC.

Fam. *Malvaceae*

92. Hibiscus syriacus L.
93. *Malva sylvestris* L., H-Ht, L8, T6, U4, Rx, N8, Euras.

Fam. *Oleaceae*

94. Ligustrum vulgare L., Ph., L6, T6, Ux, R7, Nx, Eur.
95. Syringa vulgaris L., Ph, L9, T5, U4, R8, Carp.- balc.- anat.

Fam. *Oxalidaceae*

96. *Oxalis stricta* L., H, L7, T7, U5, R7, N7, Adv., Am. de N

Fam. *Paeoniaceae*

97. *Paeonia officinalis* L., L7, T5, U2, R7, Pan.

Fam. *Papaveraceae*

98. Escholtzia californica Cham.
99. *Papaver rhoeas* L., T, Cosm.

Fam. *Pinaceae*

100. *Abies alba* Mill. Ph, L7, T4, U5, R4, Nx, Centr. Eur. – Mont.
101. Picea abies L., Ph, L7, T4, U5, R4, Nx, Centr. Eur şi nordic
102. Picea pungens 'Argentea

Fam. *Poaceae*
103. *Arrhenatherum elatior* L., H, L8, Tx, U5, R6, N7, Euras.
104. *Bromus inermis* Leyss., H, L8, Tx, U4, R7, N5, Cont. Euras.
105. *Calamagrostis epigeios* L., G, L7, Tx, Ux, Rx, N7
106. *Cynodon dactylon* L., G, L8, T6, U3, Rx, N5, S2, Cosm.
107. Dactylis glomerata L.
108. *Elymus repens* L.
109. *Hordeum murinum* L., T, L8, T6, U4, Rx, N4, Euras.
110. *Sorghum halepense* L., G, L7, T7, U4, Rx, Medit.

Fam. *Polemoniaceae*
111. *Phlox subulata* L.

Fam. *Polygonaceae*
112. *Polygonum aviculare* L., Fam. Polygonceae, T, L7, Tx, Ux, Rx, Nx, Cosm.
113. *Rumex crispus* L., H, L7, Tx, U6, Rx, N5, Euras.

Fam. *Portulacaceae*
114. *Portulaca grandiflora* L., T, Am. de S
115. *Portulaca oleracea* L., T, L7, T6, U4, 7, N7, Cosm.

Fam. *Primulaceae*
116. Primula officinalis L.

Fam. *Ranunculaceae*
117. *Clematis vitalba* L., L7, T6, U5, R7, N7, Centr. Eur.
118. *Delphinium consolida* L., L6, T6, U4, R7, N4, Eur.
119. Nigella damascena

Fam. *Rosaceae*
120. Rosa polyantha Siebold & Zucc.
121. Sanguisorba minor L., L7, T6, U3, R7, N2, Euras.
122. Spiraea japonica
123. *Spiraea x vanhouttei* L., Ph, Cult. Ornam. Şi uneori subspont.

Fam. *Rubiaceae*
124. *Galium aparine* L., T., L7, Tx, U6, Rx, N9, Circ.

Fam. *Salicaceae*
125. *Populus alba* L., Ph, L7, Tx, U5, R4, N6, Euras.
126. *Salix caprea* L, Ph, L7, Tx, U6, Rx, Nx, Euras.

Fam. *Saxifragaceae*
127. Bergenia cordifolia (Haw.) Sternb.
128. *Chrysosplenium oppisitifolium* L., H, L6, T2, U9, R3, N4, Carp.
129. Heuchera sanguinea Engelm.
130. Hosta plantaginea Engelm.

Fam. *Simaroubaceae*
131. Ailanthus altissima Mill., Ph, China

Fam. *Scrophulariaceae*
132. *Anthirrinum majus* L., T, L7, Tx, U4, Rx, Euras.
133. Buddleja davidii Franch.

134. Paulownia tomentosa Steud.
Fam. *Solanaceae*
135. *Petunia x hybrida* Juss., L7, T7, U4, R7, S5, Adv.
Fam. *Taxaceae*
136. *Taxus baccata* L., Ph, L5, T5, U5, R5, N2, Atl.- medit.-centr. Eur.
Fam. *Tiliaceae*
137. *Tilia cordata* Mill., Ph, L7,Tx, Ux, Rx, N5, Eur
138. *Tilia tomentosa* Moench, Ph, L7, t6, U4, R7, N5, Balc.- Pan.
Fam. *Verbenaceae*
139. *Verbena x hybrida* Groenl. & Rumpler
Fam. *Violaceae*
140. Viola odorata L.
141. Viola x wittrockiana Gams.
Fam. *Vitaceae*
142. *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* L., Estul Am. De N
143. *Vitis vinifera* L., Ph, L6, T8, U9, R8, N6, Sud-est si Centr.-sud Eur.

As a result of our observation of the cormophyte flora, we appreciate that the diversity of ornamental species used for grave decoration is limited to a lower number. The existent combinations are not the most inspired ones, under horticultural and aesthetic aspect. People use financially accessible, common, tolerant species, which do not require special care. Of the 143 species, 107 are ornamental and 36 weeds. The weeds have a great reproduction and dispersal capacity, reduced pretentions to the soil type, low competition etc. Although most of these do not raise special problems, in some cases, their presence must not be ignored. Here, we refer to *Amorpha fruticosa* L., a sometimes ornamentally cultivated shrub, but whose use for this purpose should be avoided because of its high invasive potential and rapid vegetal reproduction through sprouts, but also through seeds. Another shrub recently introduced in the invasive species lists is the *Phytolacca americana* L., which is why it should be eliminated. Without raising invasion problems, the *Sambucus ebulus* L. removal is also recommended, due to its repulsive smell. Of the herbaceous species, the *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* L. sometimes grows in unattended areas. It must be eliminated, being one of the most invasive species. A great propagation capacity, given by the impressive number of seeds / plant, is displayed by *Amaranthus retroflexus* L. as well, a frequent species in the Timisoara flora. *Portulaca oleracea* L. is another aggressive weed, with high spreading potential, which grows sporadically in graveyards. Without raising great problems, *Oxalis stricta* L. can be considered as invasive. Also frequently encountered on graves is *Stellaria media* (L.) Willd., but which, due to its reduced height and short vegetation period, does not raise significant problems. In city cemeteries, *Sorghum halepense* (L.) Pers. grows as well, an aggressive weed, which must be eliminated. Other weeds growing in graveyards, and whose presence is unwanted, are: *Elymus repens* L., *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers., *Polygonum aviculare* L., *Convolvulus arvensis* L., *Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop., *Carex* sp., *Carduus* sp., *Mentha longifolia* L., *Conium maculatum* L., *Conyza canadensis* (L.) Cronquist, *Artemisia vulgaris* L., *Arctium lappa* L., *Sonchus oleraceus* L., *Lactuca serriola* L., *Picris hieracioides* L., *Setaria* sp., *Vicia* sp., *Galium aparine* L., *Linaria vulgaris* L., *Lamium purpureum* L., *Taraxacum officinale* Welb., *Xanthium strumarium* L., *Fumaria officinalis* L., *Veronica* sp., *Cymbalaria muralis* Gaertn. etc.

Estimating the species number / grave, it does not exceed 8-10 species, and for most graves the used species number is 4-5. They are common species like tulips, heartsease, carnations, lilies, daffodils, irises, peonies, lilies of the valley, petunias etc. Frequently used are also *Bergenia, Begonia, Heuchera, Erica, Euphorbia myrsinites, Hosta plantaginea, Gaillardia, Gazania* etc. Among shrubs, people prefer *Lavandula angustifolia, Syringa vulgaris, Lonicera japonica, Buxus sempervirens, Euonymus fortunei, Hibiscus syriacus* etc. Among lianas, we have encountered species of the genera *Parthenocissus, Hedera, Clematis*. Among trees we remark the cypress, the thuja, the fir, the spruce, the silver lime, the small-leaved lime, the oak, the walnut.

Regarding the interspecies combinations, we noticed that heartsease, tulips and roses are frequently used in combination with: primroses, peonies, carnations, lavender, irises, petunias, chrysanthemum, geraniums, sage, forget-me-nots, marigolds etc. Houseleek, irises and lavender combine with less species: tulips, chrysanthemum, carnations, roses. Often, graves are decorated monospecifically, only with daffodils, petunias, carnations or heartsease.

With reference to the grave decoration traditions in our country, there is a visible lack of imagination, vision and information even in a city like Timisoara. Although most graves are plated, the others display obvious aesthetic discrepancies. Some are abundantly decorated with plants, others present few species, and in either situation they are unbalanced from a floristic and aesthetic point of view. Then again, there is the category of unattended graves, which are covered in weeds. The spaces between the graves are being totally ignored. The covering of the grave with a plaque and the cultivation of only a few plant species is habitual, the plants being placed either towards the funerary stone, or on the sides or in the four angles. When tree bark is used, the number of plant species, or at least the number of the plants is higher. There are still many graves covered only with earth, in which case, if they are not properly taken care of, they are covered in weeds. The attention is unpleasantly drawn by the abundant use of artificial decorations, accessories and plastic flowers, preferred because of one's convenience (since they do not require special care).

Species of the Timisoara flora, which are optimal for cultivation in cemeteries. The usage possibilities of ornamental plants for grave decoration are practically unlimited. Ornamental plant catalogues, as well as the sites of firms commercializing them are a source of information and material.

Ornamental trees with pendent globular, column shapes can bring beauty to graveyards (*Betula, Salix, Acer, Fraxinus, Ulmus, Catalpa, Prunus* etc.). Also, there are numerous shrubs, which could be used: dwarf coniferous trees (junipers, cypresses, firs, spruces etc.), ornamental shrubs (*Magnolia, Berberis, Cornus, Coryllus, Cytisus, Pyracantha, Hypericum, Acer, Chaenomeles, Potentilla, Viburnum* etc.). Among lianas, *Campsis, Wisteria, Hydrangea, Hedera, Philadelphus, Clematis* are genera whose species display varieties and forms frequently cultivated and used in arrangements. The range of herbaceous species is even wider: *Anemone, Allium, Gladiolus, Coreopsis, Delphinium, Dicentra, Digitalis, Cosmos, Alcea, Rheum* etc.

Timisoara's flora presents increased diversity, in the last years being inventoried and described 452 cormophytes (289 herbaceous species and 193 woody species - http://www.biotowns.ro). Most of these are spontaneous species. Among the ornamental ones, the following species can be used in cemeteries: *Allium scorodoprasum, Amaranthus caudatus,*

Callistephus chinensis, Campsis radicans, Cephalotaxus haringtonia, Chionanthus retusus, Cosmos bipinnatus, ornamental *Lathyrus* species, ornamental barberries, *Helichrysum bracteatum* (mentioned in the Jewish Cemetery), *Impatiens balsamina* (mentioned in the city cemeteries) etc.

Disposing of a wide floristic, taking into account a few flower arrangement art principles, such as: lines, proportions, colour, harmony, symmetry, rhythm, contrast, using both one's own expression ways as well as one's imagination and intuition, we believe that one can obtain successful floristic compositions and combinations.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper treats a topic less approached in our country, namely cemeteries viewed as entertainment elements under the aspect of plant species growing on graves.

We chose to analyse, from this point of view, the Roman-Catholic and Orthodox Cemeteries from the Mehala neighbourhood, as well as the Heroes Cemetery of Timisoara.

The species list comprises 143 ornamental palnts or weeds from the spontaneous flora, distributed in 60 botanic families. Since the used plants are practically the same in all three cemeteries, we believed they could be presented in a common list.

The total number of plants used to decorate graves is of 107 (with an average of 80 in the two smaller cemeteries, and somewhat more numerous in the Heroes Cemetery). We inferred from the consulted references that the average plant species number in European cemeteries is of 86. We appreciate that our data subscribe to this parameter.

From our observation of the used species, we infer that common plants are preferred, financially accessible and enduring, that the number of wood species is fairly low (under 15) and that weeds are a problem occurring as a result of non-proper maintenance of these settlements.

Under an aesthetic aspect, one may observe the lack of knowledge regarding floristic combinations usage or arrangement ways. These lacks are firstly referred to education, and secondly to finances.

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