

## IN MEMORIAM

ROBERT H. MOHLENBROCK (B: 26 SEPTEMBER 1931 – D: 5 NOVEMBER 2024)

John B. Taft, editor

The world has lost a botanical giant with the death of Dr. Robert H. Mohlenbrock at age 93. Dr. Mohlenbrock committed his long and productive life to the study of vascular plants with a particular focus on the flora of Illinois (Figure 1). A native and lifelong Illinoian born and raised in Murphysboro, his interest in botany was early on with timely encouragement by a high school instructor. By the age of 26, he had earned his doctorate from Washington University, specializing in plant systematics and floristics, and began a 34-year career as a professor of Botany at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, serving as department chairperson for nearly half that time. During these academic years he fostered a keen interest in botany for hundreds of students who enrolled in classes he taught and he received numerous awards acknowledging him as an outstanding teacher. His lab was often bustling with botanical researchers where a total of 25 students earned PhDs and 68 earned Masters degrees under his mentorship. Dr. Mohlenbrock's impact is particularly magnified when considering that many of these students became leaders in systematics and especially in the study and protection of natural areas. A prolific author, Dr. Mohlenbrock published 81 books and nearly 700 scientific and popular articles extending his influence far beyond the classroom. Perhaps foremost among these are his field guides and illustrated flora series for the vascular flora of Illinois, enabling botanists throughout the state to have resources for plant identification. For the field botanist, determining species identifications using the field guide was like having Dr. Mohlenbrock along in your daypack. I wore out many copies of the editions over the years. Particularly relevant to botanical study and appreciation for the flora of Illinois, the Illinois Native Plant Society (originally the Southern Illinois Native Plant Society) and this journal were conceived in Dr. Mohlenbrock's lab with the first issue of *Erigenia* published in 1982. Dr. Mohlenbrock helped the journal get off to a good start contributing about 40% of the articles in the first ten volumes. Botanists and

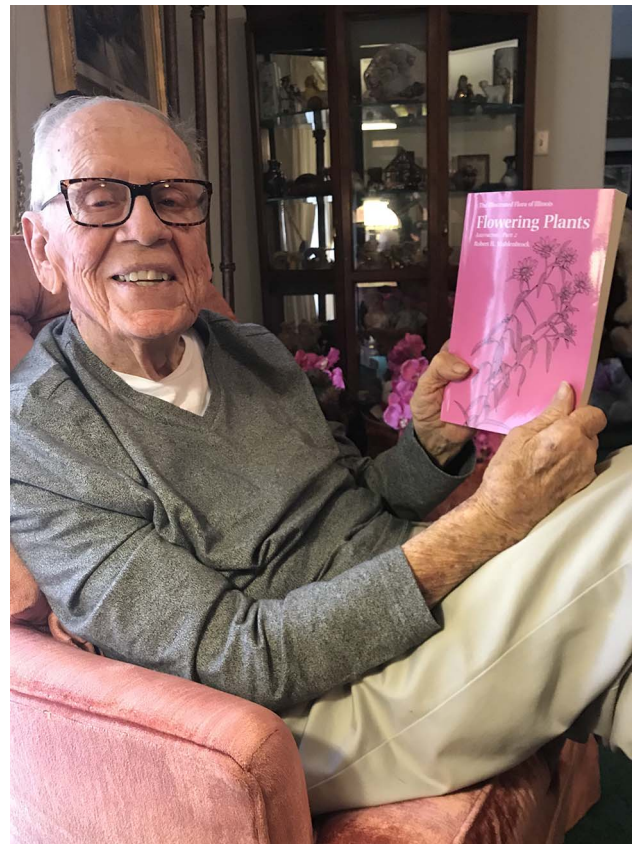


Figure 1. Dr. Robert H. Mohlenbrock in March 2020 holding a copy of the recently published Asteraceae Volume 2 for the Illustrated Flora series. Photo by Chris Benda.

plant enthusiasts everywhere, particularly Illinois, owe a major debt of gratitude for the tremendously impactful legacy of Dr. Robert H. Mohlenbrock's contributions toward the study, conservation, and appreciation of botanical resources.