

XI. RESEARCH ON PLANT GUMS — URGENT REQUEST FOR SAMPLES

Dr. D.M.W. Anderson, of the Department of Chemistry, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH 9 3JJ, Great Britain, started work on plant gums some 12 years ago. Of course he has to rely on samples sent to him as most gums come from tropical forests, hence this request.

Though my experience learns me to be pessimistic about results of requests, I will go on with the good work of stimulating collaboration. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that there is for progress of science a desperate need for this cooperation between laboratories situated in the temperate zone and workers in the tropics and subtropics.

Dr. Anderson reported that the most fruitful results hitherto obtained were with genera like *Acacia*, *Albizia*, *Araucaria*, *Boswellia*, *Cómbretum*, *Prunus*, *Lannea*, *Azadirachta*, *Khaya*, *Sterculia*, *Anogeissus*, and *Terminalia*. But there are many others of which nothing is known and many new gums or gum-resins may be expected to occur.

Now the practical side: how is gum obtained? It is often formed at pruning wounds, sites of injury by animals, or sites of infestation by wood-boring beetles. It can also be obtained artificially by making cuttings and stripping the bark onto the cambium. The type of wound is found to be unimportant, as the gum or gum-resin is characteristic of the tree.

How much gum is needed? A few (2-3) grams (about a spoonful) is sufficient to examine the chemical character of the gum. For a complete survey, however, Dr. Anderson wants some 100 grams. The samples should be forwarded by airmail in a polythene bag (not in glassware).

Naturally a voucher herbarium specimen must be made for an accessible herbarium in order to correlate the sample with the name of the tree.

Dr. Anderson is prepared to refund all packing costs or, if desired, to donate in exchange textbooks or other printed matter.

I strongly support the request, because any chemical knowledge of tropical plants must be welcomed, for future use of plants, for taxonomic purpose, in short, to accumulate knowledge.

And here is a worthy instance working in a particular field with great knowledge acquired, ensuring positive results.

C.G.G.J. van Steenis.