Editorial

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Dear SEB members and other readers of *Economic Botany*

This issue of *Economic Botany*, 63(1), is the last I will edit. After 4 years and 3 publishers, I have decided to retire from this position. I have had a wonderful time working with authors and reviewers from around the globe; I have particularly enjoyed helping young scholars move research from masters or PhD theses into the legitimate scholarly literature.

Many Associate Editors and reviewers have been particularly helpful: Wendy Applequist, Dan Austin, George Estabrook, Mary Eubanks, Will McClatchey, John Rashford, Viki Reyes, Rick Stepp, and Tamara Ticktin have been particularly helpful, beyond all that one could anticipate. And I want to thank David Arora and Glenn Shepard who did yeoman work on the mushroom issue 62 (3), which I hope you have all enjoyed. I hope that all of you will be as generous with Bob Voeks, the new editor, as you have been with me.

I am pleased to think that the quality of the material in the journal has increased over these years; there are fewer purely descriptive papers, and more comparative and analytical ones, raising and testing hypotheses and developing or challenging theories. At the same time, I have been distressed more than once by papers where the data or general findings simply did not support a clear dogma enunciated by an author, who stuck to it nonetheless (knowledge is decreasing; environments are degrading; species are disappearing; regulation from above, or from outside, is *essential*.)

And finally an apology. The last seventeen issues of EB have each had, somewhere on the back cover, a very small image of a blue, pink or red flower, 5 petals, deeply cut leaflets. There has been no explanation of these images. A few people have asked, but most haven't. Many years ago I learned that the Iroquois had a category of medicinal plants which they saw as related since they had "hooklike structures or other ensnaring/capturing qualities." This category was not large - a dozen or more plants - most of them obviously "sticky" somehow, as are stickseed, sedge and bedstraw; some are less physically ensnaring but are effective at it anyway, as is *Sarracenia purpurea* L, (Sarraceniaceae, purple pitcher plant), which captures and drowns insects in tubular, fluid filled, leaves. In one case, the ensnaring quality of the plants is apparently understood by the Iroquois in the following way: when the seeds of *Geranium maculatum* L. (Geraniaceae, cranesbill) are ripe, they are held by five looping carpels, "hooks," attached to the peduncle; it is this plant (occasionally varying species of the genus) which have appeared on the cover. These hooks provide the logic for using the roots of this plant, along with the others in the category, for cold sores, the sores of venereal disease, and for healing the navel of a newborn. A pharmacologist might attribute any effectiveness of cranesbill in these uses to the fact that the roots contain significant quantities of the astringent tannin. The Iroquois, however, were not aware of the existence of tannin, just as most pharmacologists are unaware of the hooklike and ensnaring quality of cranesbill, just the sort of thing to apply to an everted, running, escaping thing like a cold sore (at least if you are an Iroquois). A number of these "sticky plants" are used by the Iroquois as "Love medicines." Typically, these formulations are designed to bring back (to recapture, to ensnare) a wandering wife or an unfaithful husband. These can also be used as "basket medicines," or "peddler medicines." If you sprinkle the root tea on the baskets or other items you are trying to sell, it will hook a buyer. I decided many years ago that it was impractical to sprinkle root juice on books; but it also seemed plausible to me that a photograph of the plant might serve the same purpose. So, the wild geranium became my totem plant to encourage people to buy and read my work. I hope you don't mind my practicing economic botany on you.

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