

Blumea

Compositae
[*Asteraceae*]

Blumea honours a German-born Dutch botanist, Carl Ludwig Blume (1796-1862), who studied and collected plants in Java (then a Dutch colony and at the beginning of the 21st Century is part of Indonesia). In 1815 he became assistant to the Dutch botanist, Professor S.J. Brugmans (1763-1819) who had been tasked with restoring the natural history collections (taken by the French to Paris in 1795) to their Dutch home. Professor Brugmans and Blume's patron, the Duchess of Braunschweig both encouraged him to study medicine and natural history – and he became a doctor of medicine in 1817. He travelled to Java and in early 1819 the Dutch Government made him Deputy-Director of the Botanic Gardens at Buitenzorg (now more familiar as Bogor in Indonesian western Java); in mid-1822 he was appointed Director and also Inspector of Vaccine, then in 1823 he became Commissioner of the civil health service too. From 1819-1826, based at Buitenzorg, he in effect executed a scientific exploration of western and central Java acquiring information (including the medicinal importance of native plants not least invaluable for his vaccination tasks), collecting plants (some of which had already been discovered by his peers) and animals, and establishing his herbarium. Additionally he corresponded with other scientists (as he was destined to do from then on) and recorded his findings. From 1825-1827, in addition to his many other duties, he researched his findings further, with the help of many staff, and drew together all the gathered information and plant material into the *Bijdragen tot de Flora van Nederlandsch Indië*. This embraced about 170 families covering roughly 700 genera and 2400 species of flowering plants a significant number of which were new and he also named the new ones as well (most of the names would apply to this day). He returned to the Netherlands in late 1826 (with many collections, most of which he had gathered) on two years' leave in order to perform further research for his next major work, *Flora Javae*. [In 1825 it is noted that a non-botanist, G. van Raalten, who it would seem was unacquainted with botanical conventions, wrote a letter slandering Blume by claiming he had stolen drawings and manuscripts from fellow botanists, drawings and manuscripts that were reposing in the Buitenzorg library while Blume was in Europe– and several botanists point out today that this irresponsible and unfair slander would have placed an unnecessary cloud over Blume's head for some period of time.] In 1828 he did not return to Java and his collections of animals and insects went to the Museum of Natural History in Leiden. In Spring 1829, as Professor he became Director of the newly founded *Rijksherbarium* just established in Brussels only for it to move to Leiden a few years later. Blume encouraged civil servants missionaries and pharmacists abroad to collect plants and send herbarium specimens to Leiden, he bought collections when these became available and maintained his connections with Java. But the results appear to have been extremely mixed. Blume (where the *Rijksherbarium* was concerned) seems to have been considered by many of his peers as monopolistic and they were sometimes loathe to submit collections to him. Another of his significant publications was the two volume catalogue *Museum Botanicum*, each volume being published in parts – the first indexed volume from 1849-1852 and the second unindexed in 16 parts beginning in 1852 and concluding in 1856.

Apart from the works already mentioned he was a prodigious author. All his botanic life was for his adopted home, the Netherlands (of which he became a Dutch citizen in 1851), for the scientific community as a whole and for the sake of all people. Despite problems in the botanical world he may have unwittingly contributed to, he is believed to have had many friends at home and abroad and a happy family life, as well as the respect of many peers. It is understood that he died in Leiden in 1862 following a long and painful illness.