



Arne Rousi

* 1.9.1931 † 12.7.2020

PROFESSOR EMERITUS of Botany and Rector Emeritus of the University of Turku Arne Rousi died on 12th July 2020 in Turku at the age of 88. He had been a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters since 1973.

Rousi completed his academic studies at the University of Helsinki and earned his PhD in 1958. He went on to the University of Turku near the end of his studies, visited the United States on a study trip in 1959–1960 and worked as a senior researcher at the Agricultural Research Centre from 1960–1966, after which he returned permanently to the University of Turku. He was appointed to be an Associate Professor of Botany in 1966 and Professor in 1976. For the last six years of his career, Rousi served as Rector of the University of Turku (1987–1993).

Arne Rousi was a geneticist and a plant systematist who understood the delicate balance of nature and whose interests were plant variation, breeding of food plants and questions related to the diversity of plant species. Rousi's cytotaxonomical and biosystematics research focused extensively on wild plants and economic plants not only in Europe, but also in Asia and South America. Among others, these

included the *Ranunculus auricomus* group, the genus *Taraxacum*, *Potentilla anserina*, *Rubus arcticus x idaeus*, *Vaccinium corymbosum*, *Vicia cracca*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Allium schoenoprasum*, *Ullucus tuberosus*, *Oxalis tuberosa*, *Tropaeolum tuberosum* and especially *Hippophaë rhamnoides* (sea buckthorn).

In the 1980s, Chinese universities were looking for a renowned sea buckthorn expert and settled on Arne Rousi. His first publication on sea buckthorn in 1965 examined the cytology of the Asian and European populations of the species, and was followed by a report on the species-formation and history of sea buckthorn. His work from 1971, namely, *The genus Hippophaë L. A taxonomic study*, can be considered a turning point, becoming an international handbook and reference work for decades. In the 1970s, Rousi was also a pioneer in the research on vitamin C and the phenolic compounds of sea buckthorn.

Arne Rousi also actively popularized his research. In 1979, he partnered with his colleague Paavo Kallio to co-edit *Kasvien maailma*, a big plant encyclopaedia published by Otava. Rousi's book *Auringonkukasta viiniköynnökseen* was

granted the State Award for Public Information in 1998. The book describes the food plants of the world and their evolution.

Rousi encouraged students and young researchers to pursue an international career, which gave rise to many still ongoing projects in China, Peru and the Amazon. They have led to the formation of multidisciplinary international consortiums in the fields of biology, food sciences, geography, social sciences and the law. Food studies on native Andean crops, purple potatoes and sea buckthorn berries still continue at the University of Turku.

Gene banks, scientific profiling of universities, media coverage, the criteria of quality and competition and the internationalization of research and education were not considered self-evident in the academia of the late 1980s. These are some of the goals Arne Rousi pursued as Rector of the University of Turku.

The six-year rectorship of Rousi was divided into two opposing phases in terms of their operating conditions. The beginning was marked by the government's decision to increase the level of university appropriations at the turn of the 1980s to the 1990s. The University of Turku was heavily involved in launching major cooperation projects, such as the building complexes representing the natural and medical sciences. When the economy of Finland fell into a deep depression in 1991, the final years of Rousi's rectorship were a struggle with the constant pressure

of appropriation cuts and savings schemes.

In this situation, Rector Rousi saw reason to discuss the division of responsibilities between universities in the country and the allocation of resources to match their respective strengths. Rousi proposed that the focus areas of the University of Turku, for instance, should be environmental research and ecology, molecular biology and biotechnology and the research of art and culture. Rousi began to promote the internationalization of students particularly through the Erasmus exchange programme, which was taking off at the time.

Alongside his career as a scientist, music had a profound impact on the life of Arne Rousi for decades. He started his piano studies in his youth at Jyväskylän musiikkiopisto. Over time, he was able to study with some of the most distinguished piano artists of his time. Rousi has reminisced about them in his book *Ystäväni musiikin maestrot*, published in 2006.

Botany and an academic career became Rousi's life's mission, but always accompanied by music. He frequently played in the orchestra Turun Soitannollinen Seura and other ensembles. He served as the long-standing chair of the board of Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival and the chair of Turun Soitannollinen Seura.

In addition to his spouse, children and grandchildren, Arne Rousi is missed by a wide circle of friends in science and music. His friendly personality will live on.

*Obituary by Keijo Virtanen
and Heikki Kallio*