

BLYTTIA

NORSK BOTANISK FORENINGS TIDSSKRIFT



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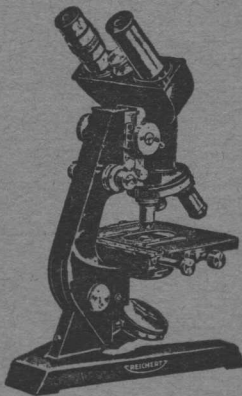
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*Enerepresentant
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Chromosome Numbers of Scandinavian Arctic-Alpine Plant Species. I.

Kromosomtallstudier hos skandinaviske fjellplanter. I.

BY

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Introduction.

For more than a century our arctic-alpine flora has been the main topic of Norwegian plant geography. Extensive collections of plants from all parts of the alpine and arctic areas have been brought together on long and fatiguing travels, collections that now are to be found in the herbaria of the botanical museums in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø. These collections form the fundamental basis of our knowledge about the detailed distribution of the species. They also are an invaluable source for renewed investigations, as the scientific methods and views change and the progress of science leads to a better and wider knowledge.

Especially as to the delimitation of species opinion has varied considerably in the course of time. Up to the beginning of this century most taxonomists worked with the Linnean species, a wide concept based upon the supposition that species are well separated units, all individuals of the same species being in conformity as to the main morphological characters.

However, many species which are widely distributed in areas varying considerably in topography and climate, show great variation as to their morphology and ecology. It is often difficult to ascertain whether such species comprise different races of slight systematic value, or whether the populations differ because of their content of different biotypes distinct enough to be called species. Also geographically isolated populations may diverge. In many of these cases a closer examination has shown that the variation is discontinual, and many of the previous collective species have been split up into series of microspecies.

We may ask to what extent it is possible to get an objective basis for classification in such cases, and to reveal the real nature of relationship between the varying plant groups.

First genetical experiments have shown that species may cross and produce fertile hybrids, but that the hybrid offspring most often is weak or more or less sterile and not able to survive. The experimental taxonomists working on genetical principles base the