

## Helgi Jónasson frá Gvendarstöðum.

*Sept. 26, 1887—April 13, 1972.*

Helgi Jónasson from Gvendarstaðir in Köldukinn died at the Akureyri Hospital on April 13th 1972 at the age of 84. He was born in 1887 at Gvendarstaðir, the farm where he spent his boyhood, earned his living as a farmer, and spent his old age among his children, which had taken over the farm.

Helgi got early interested in botany, and the specimens collected by him 1907-'08, when attending the farming school at Hólar, reveal an outstanding ability to recognize plants and correctly identify them. He did not spend many years in school, but acquired thorough knowledge on the vascular flora of Iceland from nature itself, and from books. The reliability of his identifications of Icelandic plants reached the level of any specialist in that field.

Almost every summer, when other farmers were harvesting and drying their hay, Helgi Jónasson left his farm to spend several weeks on botanical excursions in remote parts of Iceland. As means of long distance transport he used horses, travelled by boat or by bus, or in his last years even by plane. Within the areas to be investigated he travelled on foot and took good time for careful search. He visited many farms on his way, and made use of any available information from local farmers to detect rarities. On the farms he had facilities for pressing the plants and for overnighting. For many of his botanical excursions Helgi Jónasson received some financial support from Menningarsjóður (Icelandic Culture Fund).

Helgi Jónasson collected on his trips valuable information on the flora and the distribution of vascular plants in many northern districts of Iceland (fig. 2). In the first decades he laid emphasis on the flora of Þingeyjarsýsla, a huge district, stretching over a great deal of the eastern



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part of North Iceland. He managed to get through most of the inhabited part of this area, mainly in the period from 1930–1946. He started a manuscript on the flora of Þingeyjarsýsla, with a complete list of the vascular plants and distribution data for every province. He did, however, not finish this work. He explored Dýrafjörður District in the Vestfirðir Peninsula in 1947, the Skagafjörður District in the North in 1950, and travelled through some eastern parts of Iceland 1952–'53. After that he spent most summers investigating various parts of the Vestfirðir Peninsula, mainly in the period 1954–1964.

Helgi Jónasson took an exceptional care in building up his herbarium, which was bought by the Museum of Natural History in Reykjavík 1963. Besides in the herbarium, most of the information collected by Helgi is stored in his manuscripts and note books. Helgi Jónasson also published several botanical papers, which are listed below.

*Hörður Kristinsson*

#### BOTANICAL LITERATURE by HELGI JÓNASSON, GVENDARSTÖÐUM.

1937. Gróður í Slúttnesi. (The vegetation of Slúttnes, Mývatn). Náttfr. 7: 150.
- 1939a. Flóru-listi Reykjahverfis, frá Kringluvatni norður að Skógakvísl. (A floristic list for Reykjahverfi, N.-Iceland). Náttfr. 9: 89–93.
- 1939b. Gróður í Straumlækjargili. (The vegetation in Straumlækjargil, Köldukinn). Náttfr. 9: 101–102.
1944. Ný íslensk grastegund. (A new Icelandic species of Gramineae, *Avena pubescens*). Náttfr. 14: 96.
1945. Plöntuskrá úr Kelduhverfi. (Plant list from Kelduhverfi, N.-Iceland). Náttfr. 15: 178–185.
1947. Gróður Ásbyrgis. (The vegetation of Ásbyrgi, N.-Iceland). Náttfr. 17: 117–119.
1952. Grasaleit í Útmanasveit og Eiðáþinghá sumarið 1951. (Botanical investigations in Útmanasveit and Eiðáþinghá Districts in the summer 1951). Náttfr. 22: 137–140.
1955. Að austan. (Plant records from the East). Náttfr. 25: 36–39.
1956. Að vestan. (Plant records from the West). Náttfr. 26: 138–139.

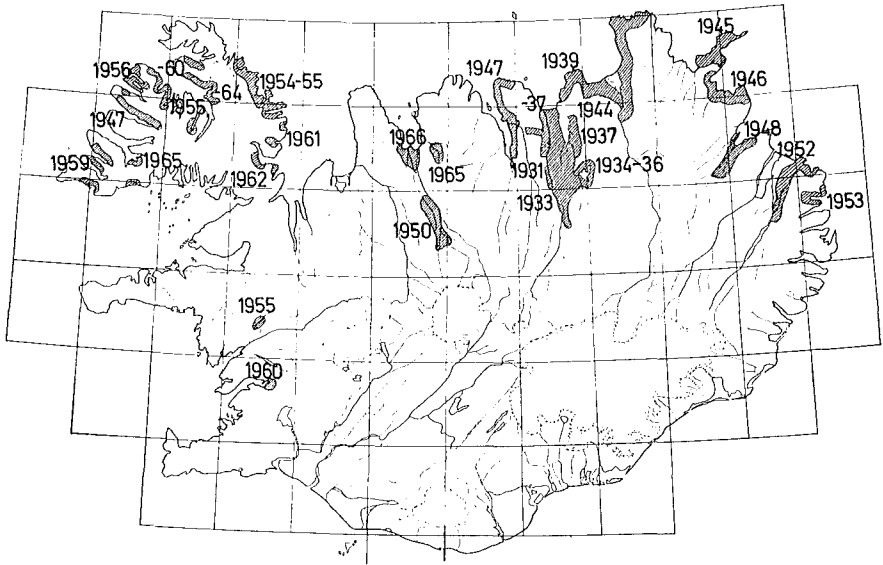


FIGURE 2. A map of Iceland showing the main areas botanically investigated by Helgi Jónasson.

1963. Höggormshaus o. fl. (Some observations on *Agropyron caninum*, *Veronica chamaedrys* and *Knautia arvensis*). Flóra 1: 163–164.
1964. Frá Vestfjörðum. (Floristic novelties from the Vestfirðir District). Flóra 2: 83–88.
1966. Flóra og gróður í Aðaldal. (The flora and the vegetation of Aðaldalur Valley, N.-Iceland). Flóra 4: 19–36.
1972. Flóra Mývatnssveitar. (The Flora of the Lake Mývatn Area). Acta Botanica Islandica 1: 32–42.