

Nicolas Hallé (1927–2017), French botanist

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Nicolas Hallé worked at the Paris herbarium from 1959 to 1992. He studied West African plants and also those of Oceania, especially New Caledonia's orchids. Something of his very full life as a collector, taxonomist and artist is given by the web-link at the end of *References* below. The current lack of a memorial by his compatriots prevents my giving any biographical detail here, beyond noting that he was a brother of Francis Hallé (1938–), himself an eminent tropical biologist (e.g., Hallé & Tomlinson 2006*; F. Hallé 2018).

I am writing partly to acknowledge a debt: a few years ago, Nicolas Hallé gave me permission to use several of his beautiful dip-pen and ink orchid drawings in one of my own works (Gardner 2013). Thinking to gain an increment of artistic credibility I copied the drawings rather than using them as published. This copying was an education and a pleasure.

Although Hallé mentions that his study of the orchids of New Caledonia began in 1971 "slowly and with difficulty", it was completed in just six years (N. Hallé 1977). It includes nearly 200 spp. and is illustrated with rather more than that

number of detailed figures, including cleverly designed tables and distribution maps that also show altitude and flowering time. Anyone interested in orchid taxonomy or modern botanical art will know this work; suffice it to say that it was immediately awarded a prize by France's Académie des Sciences.

A decade later a treatment of New Caledonia's Santalaceae appeared (N. Hallé 1988), with illustrations that turned these rather cryptic, dusty shrubs into intricate gems of nature.

Two less-technical articles about French Polynesia's Austral Islands appeared during this time (N. Hallé 1980, 1983). They contain charming diagrams of plant zonation and thumbnail sketches of members of the prominent families. I have selected the plate here (Fig. 1) because it shows two particularly widespread Polynesian orchids.

* **Editors' footnote:** The tree architecture article (Hallé & Tomlinson 2006) was offered to the ABS journal because of the close relationship between several Auckland botanists and Barry Tomlinson (who gave the Lucy Cranwell lecture in 1997).

References

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Hallé, N. 1988: Santalaceae. Pp. 99–152 in: *Flore de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances*, 15: Orchidaceae.
Association Musée de Seine-Port website <http://www.museedeseineport.info/MuseeVirtuel/Salles/Dauchez/HalleNicolas/NicolasHalle.htm>
Accessed 9 Feb 2019.



Planche 3. — Orchidées de Tubuai : 1, *Calanthe triplicata* (Willemet) Ames (N. Hallé 6828 et, pour l'inflorescence, Vesco B 1847, Tahiti); 2, *Malaxis resupinata* (Forster) O. Kuntze (St. John 14134, Tahiti, et St. John 16778, Rurutu).

Fig. 1. 1. *Calanthe triplicata*. 2. *Malaxis resupinata*. N. Hallé 1980, pl. 3.