A man of many talents and even more friends, Edgar Anderson, who was described by a colleague as "one of the top 50 American botanists," collapsed and died on the grounds of the Missouri Botanical Garden Wednesday afternoon, June 18, 1969.

Associated with the Garden and Washington University for almost 45 years, Dr. Anderson at the time of his death was Engelmann Professor Emeritus of Botany on this campus. At his request, since 1966 he had been listed simply as "botanist" on the staff of the Missouri Botanical Garden (Shaw's Garden), although over the years he had held many important posts there, including the directorship from 1954–57.

A world-famous scientist, Dr. Anderson was probably best known in technical circles for his important research on corn. But laymen know him for his unique and distinctive observations about everyday plants, including weeds. Many of his thoughts about the botanical world were published in the Bulletin of the Missouri Botanical Garden, and although quite a few of these articles were unsigned they could always be identified, according to an associate, Dr. Hugh Cutler, by "their breezy style, diversity of content, and 'let's-look-at-this-together' attitude."

Some of his most popular pieces were actually "mini-essays" on such homely topics as the origin of the ubiquitous Philodendron, a plant which was brought to the World's Fair in this city in 1904 and ultimately became known as "St. Louis Ivy." Its fascinating transformation from a rare botanical curiosity to what Dr. Anderson called "the adaptable little plant of window sills and florists shops" was told by "Andy," as his students sometimes called him, in deceptively simple English that reads easily but is the work of a master craftsman, who wrote as well as many top journalists.

All told, it is estimated that Edgar Anderson, during his seventy-one years on this earth, produced over 2000 scientific papers, notes, and popular articles. Between 1941 and 1954, alone, he published 14 major papers on corn and its relatives that have influenced corn breeding in the United States and elsewhere.

Edgar Anderson’s approach to science was not always orthodox, and it is probably an understatement to say that he was considered a maverick by many geneticists. In some respects, he was far ahead of his time, and even today not all of his theories are accepted. But more often than not time has proved him right.

For example, in a recent paper entitled "What I Found Out About the Corn Plant," Dr. Anderson summarized briefly how he first began to suspect that teosinte, a big weedy grass, long believed to be the chief ancestor of corn, could not possibly have been the progenitor of this popular cereal. This revolutionary idea, he explained, "turned the old theory (of the origin of corn) upside down." Instead, Dr. Anderson speculated that teosinte might quite possibly have come from corn crossed with Tripsacum, a thought that first struck many botanists including Dr. Paul Mangelsdorf of Harvard as "fantastic." Dr. Anderson recalled: "When I mentioned my new theory to him (Mangelsdorf) he listened but practically forgot it, until in studying the grandchildren of the cross between these two giant grasses (corn and Tripsacum) he ran into unexpected results that called it to mind." Eventually the work of Mangelsdorf and Dr. Paul R. G. Reeves proved that Anderson’s reasoning was correct.

Edgar Anderson’s research on corn carried him to Mexico, Guatemala, and many

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