



VEGA-ALVARES, ELYAKIM

Elyakim Vega ("Elya") was born in 1913 in Dordrecht in the Netherlands, to a family with traditional Jewish and Zionist values.

In 1938 he began agricultural studies at the University of Wageningen, receiving the degree of Agricultural Engineer in 1945. During the war years he was of course forced to stop his studies, and was active in the underground.

At the end of the Second World War Elyakim was active in the Zionist "Training and Aliya" movement for emigration to then Palestine, and together with his wife Marta made Aliya in 1947.

Mr. Vega was first employed on behalf of the National Nursery Association to examine in kibbutz Ein Harod the possibility of growing flower bulbs and corms. With the establishment of the State of Israel, after 1948, Elyakim joined the Ministry of Agriculture to head the newly established Flower Division. His base was in Jerusalem, and he carried out trials throughout Israel in Kibbutz and private nurseries which expressed interest in flower growing.

In 1955 Dr. Peleg, then director of the then Agricultural Research Station (the predecessor of ARO), requested Mr. Vega to join the research establishment and set up a flower research unit in Bet Dagan. Work began with a small team, but under his leadership grew in the following years.

In 1960 the University of Wageningen granted Vega a PhD degree for his thesis "Opportunities and Risks in Flower Bulb Growing in Israel".

The experiments conducted under Dr. Vega's supervision first involved the possibilities of growing bulbs and corms of narcissus, lily, gladiola and others for export. He invested great efforts in promoting the production of gladiolas, including the breeding of a variety ("Hanna") based on a crossing with a South African genus.

In the next stage, the research team turned to the development of flower crops that reach peak flowering during winter months, and make good candidates for exporting to the cold Northern Hemisphere countries.



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The work was carried out in the Bet Dagan laboratories as well as in plots and greenhouses throughout Israel. Because of the proliferation of diseases in ornamental plants, Dr. Vega paid special attention to the preparation of clean propagation materials.

Dr. Vega headed the flower research department of ARO until his official retirement in 1978, but continued the work for two more years. He then continued working as consultant to flower and ornamentals growers in agricultural settlements in the Judean hills.

Dr. Elyakim Vega-Alvares is considered to be the initiator of flower growing in Israel. In 1998 he summarized his personal and professional memoirs in his book entitled: "A Dream Come True: Return to Israel after 1900 years of exile".