

INTERNATIONAL BOTANICAL CONGRESSES 1900–2017

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[Ed. Note: This is the final installment of a three-part article on the history of the International Botanical Congresses. See Vol. 66 (3) and Vol. 66 (4) for first two parts of this article. Dr. Gray is a retired professor of plant molecular biology at the University of Cambridge, England, and has collected stamps of Great Britain since boyhood. He has written articles on Post & Go stamps and Smilers Sheets for magazines such as Gibbons Stamp Monthly. He started thematic collections on topics related to his work interests in 2006, and for the past ten years he has collected philatelic items related to Charles Darwin, plant genetics, photosynthesis, and the history of molecular biology. He has attended several International Botanical Congresses and has accumulated relevant philatelic items. He joined ATA in 2010, and the Biology Unit in 2013.]

13th Through 19th Congresses

The 13th International Botanical Congress was held at the University of Sydney, Australia on 21–28 August 1981, and a special pre-stamped envelope showing a portrait of Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) surrounded by indigenous flora was produced for the Congress (Fig. 17)



Fig. 17. Pre-stamped envelope and first day of issue handstamp for the 13th International Botanical Congress, University of Sydney.

The 24c stamp-like impression shows a flowering stem of the Red-flowering Gum [*Corymbia ficifolia* (F. Muell.) K.D. Hill & L.A.S. Johnson, previously *Eucalyptus ficifolia*].

The images surrounding the portrait of Sir Joseph Banks are clockwise from the top right: the Wonga Wonga Vine [*Pandorea pandorana* (Andrews) Steenis]; the Coast Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia* L.f.), which was first collected at Botany Bay by Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander; the Lacebark Tree (*Brachychiton discolor* F. Muell.); the Scarlet Fungus (*Cortinarius cinnabarinus* Fr.); the leaves and fruit of the Red-flowering Gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*); and the Soft Tree Fern (*Dicksonia antarctica* Labill.).

A postmark depicting a flowering stem of Early Green Wattle (*Acacia decurrens* Willd), the official emblem of the Sydney Congress, was available from 24 August, the first day of issue of the pre-stamped envelope, to the end of the Congress on 28 August 1981 (Fig. 17).

The 14th International Botanical Congress was held in the International Congress Center, West Berlin from 24 July 1987 to 1 August 1987, and a special 60pf stamp depicting a tree encircled by two curved arrows was issued on 16 July 1987 (Fig. 18). The stamp was designed by Reinhold Gerstetter and was issued with a range of philatelic products, including first day covers, first day sheets and minister cards.



Fig. 18. Stamp issued for the 14th International Botanical Congress.



Fig. 19. Handstamps used on the first day of issue, 16 July 1987 (left) and throughout the 14th International Botanical Congress (right).

A special handstamp, including the Congress emblem of *Hepatica* (*Hepatica nobilis* Schreber), was used for first day of issue items, but an alternative design, also with the Congress emblem, was used subsequently (Fig. 19).

In addition, the Congress organizers used a meter mark including the Congress emblem on their mailings. Fig. 20 shows a meter mark from August 1986.



Fig. 20. Meter mark used on mail from the organizers of the 14th International Botanical Congress.

The 15th International Botanical Congress was held in Yokohama, Japan from 28 August to 3 September 1993, and a pair of 62¥ stamps depicting endemic plants was issued on 23 August 1993 (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21. Stamps issued for the 15th International Botanical Congress, Yokohama (left), and the first day of issue handstamp (right).



The stamps were issued in sheets of 20 arranged in se-tenant pairs and showed the Wood Poppy (*Glaucidium palmatum* Siebold & Zucc.) and Umbrella Pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata* Siebold & Zucc.).

A handstamp depicting *Glaucidium palmatum* in brownish-red ink was applied to items posted on the first day of issue, but there was no special handstamp for items mailed during the Congress. A range of philatelic items, including first day covers and information sheets, were produced for these stamps.

The 16th International Botanical Congress was held in St Louis, Missouri on 1–7 August 1999, followed by the 17th Congress in Vienna, Austria on 17–23 July 2005, and the 18th Congress (IBC2011) in Melbourne, Australia on 24–30 July 2011. Unfortunately, there appear to have been no official philatelic items produced for these Congresses. E-mail and web-based communications seemed to have precluded the use of stamps. However, at the time of the 18th Congress, Australia Post had a Personalized Stamp service that allowed the inclusion of images

within current Australia Post stamps. A privately produced 60c stamp with the Congress emblem printed next to a flowering stem of Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha* Benth.), Australia's national flower, is shown in Fig. 22.

A similar personalized stamp was also used on covers serviced from the nearest post office to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.



Fig. 22. Personalized stamp privately produced for the 18th International Botanical Congress, Melbourne (IBC2011).



The 19th International Botanical Congress (IBC2017) was held in the Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition Center, Shenzhen, China on 23–29 July 2017, and the organizers produced a stamp folder, including a postcard and two label stamps with the IBC2017 logo set-tenant with two \$1.20 China Post special-use stamps in a block of four (Fig. 23). The special-use stamps were first issued on 1 May 2009 in sheets of 15 stamps each with an adjacent blank label that could be personalized with the customer's image. The stamp folders were presented to selected guests and invited speakers, and were not available to most of the delegates at the Congress.

Fig. 23. Block of two stamps and two labels with the IBC2017 logo from the stamp folder produced for selected guests and invited speakers at the 19th International Botanical Congress.

In addition, the organizers arranged for seven different commemorative handstamps to be used on items mailed at the Congress (Fig. 24). Each depicts a different plant of relevance to the Congress, to Shenzhen, or to China and was used for one day only.



Fig. 24. Daily handstamps used on items mailed at the 19th International Botanical Congress.

The handstamp for use on the first day of the Congress (23.07.2017) shows a leaf of the Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba* L.), which is the basis for the IBC2017 logo. The next handstamp (24.07.2017) shows a flower of a Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea × buttiana* Holttum & Standl.), the official flower of the city of Shenzhen.

The handstamp for the third day (25.07.2017) shows a stem of the Handkerchief Tree (*Davidia involucrata* Baill.), which is native to southern China, but which is widely cultivated worldwide. The next handstamp (26.07.2017) shows a bamboo, possibly the Dragon's Head Bamboo (*Fargesia dracocephala* T. P. Yi), which is native to central China and is eaten by giant pandas. Bamboos are culturally important in China and represent “noble character.”

The handstamp for the fifth day (27.07.2017) shows a flower of the Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn.), which is grown commercially in China for its rhizomes for human consumption. The handstamp for the sixth day (28.07.2017) shows the Chien Lan Orchid [*Cymbidium ensifolium* (L.) Swartz], which has been in cultivation in China since before Confucius (551–478 BC), who praised the beauty and fragrance of the flowers. The handstamp for the last day of the Congress (29.07.2017) shows a flower of a Tree Peony (*Paeonia suffruticosa* Andrews), which is highly revered in Chinese culture and which was voted the nation's favorite flower in 1994.

IBC2017 has the distinction of being the only International Botanical Congress that has been celebrated with a stamp issue by a foreign country. On 7 July 2017, Kyrgyz Express Post of Kyrgyzstan issued two stamps depicting flowers of a Peony and a Chrysanthemum (Fig. 25), to celebrate the Congress in Shenzhen.

The stamps were designed by Anastasia Parinuic using paintings by Ivanka Costru and were issued in two sheetlets of five stamps and one label showing a larger image of the flower. The borders of the sheetlets contained the text “19th International Botanical Congress in Shenzhen (PRC)” in Kyrgyz, Chinese, English, and Russian. Kyrgyz Express Post also produced an official first day cover and a special postmark, also designed by Anastasia Parinuic and Ivanka Costru (Fig. 25, right).

At the end of the Congress, the 20th International Botanical Congress was awarded to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and will be held on 23–29 July 2023. It will be interesting to discover if the production of philatelic items at International Botanical Congresses is continued at IBC2023.



Fig. 25. Sheets of stamps and handstamp from a first day cover produced by Kyrgyz Express Post celebrating the 19th International Botanical Congress in Shenzhen.

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