

Para la Naturaleza inaugurates Botany Institute awarding interdisciplinary research grants ^[1]

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The non-profit organization, Para la Naturaleza, recently awarded five grants for interdisciplinary research on botany through its Botanical Institute (IB).

The Botanical Institute is a novel initiative in Puerto Rico that is part of the global trends that seek to highlight the importance of botanical science both in ecosystem conservation efforts and in the enrichment of human culture. This opportunity is aimed at developing new approaches and methods to create knowledge that place botany as an integral part of human affairs in all its dimensions.

For this call Para la Naturaleza received 47 research proposals.

The criteria used for selection were: qualification, experience, multidisciplinary approach, innovation, planning and budget effectiveness. The grants awarded for the projects have a maximum budget of \$5,000. All projects will have a maximum duration of one year.

The five areas of interest established in the call for proposals were;

1. Ethnobotany: projects to document and rescue the traditional use of plants.
2. Medical botany: scientific studies of biochemical characterization of species of the flora of Puerto Rico for the development of medicinal products.
3. Botanical archeology (paleoethnobotany): specialists and thesis students interested in advancing this discipline.
4. Transdisciplinary botany: to stimulate a transdisciplinary approach to botany, encouraging projects that link it with other disciplines.
5. Climate and Botany: the study of ecosystem services related to botany with an emphasis on effects and services of flora related to climate change in all its manifestations

Selected research:

1. Fabiola Guzmán Rivera- Rural Flora: The Botany of Paredes Vivas, research that intertwines landscape architecture and urbanism.
2. Jannette Gavillan Suárez-Mitigation of the effects of Hurricane María at Finca Gaia in Aibonito
3. Lara M. Sánchez Morales-Modern soil phytoliths as an auxiliary method for paleoenvironmental reconstruction in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, focusing on the Río Grande de Manatí alluvial plain
4. Ileana I. Rodríguez Vélez- Ciudad Huerto del Este, reconstruction of the university orchard impacted by Hurricane Maria. Ciudad Huerto will be an educational, research and entrepreneurship center, located at the University of Puerto Rico, Humacao campus.
5. Kevin M. Alicea Torres- Evaluation of Kalanchoe plant species extracts on the viability of myeloid-derived suppressor cells in cancer.

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