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**THE IMPORTANCE OF ARUNDO DONAX CANE SELECTION, FOR  
MANUFACTURERS OF OBOE REEDS (2020) by [Christos Tsogias-Razakov](#).**

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[...]

## Chapter II

### Theophrastus of Eresus

#### ***“The Father of Botany” Theophrastus***

Carolus Linnaeus<sup>1</sup> is called the ancient Greek Theophrastus (*Greek: Θεόφραστος*) the father of botany. Theophrastus's real name was Tyrtamus (*Greek: Τύρταμος*) and he was born in Eresus of Lesbos island, located in the northern part of the Aegean Sea. Diogenes Laërtius<sup>2</sup> (*Greek: Διογένης Λαέρτιος*) in his well-known biographical work of ten books *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (*Greek: Βίοι καὶ γνώμαι τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκμησάντων*) written in the third century of Anno Domini, describes Theophrastus life, in his 5th book, that he lived for

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<sup>1</sup> Carolus Linnaeus, also called Carl Linnaeus, Swedish Carl von Linné, (born May 23, 1707, Råshult, Småland, Sweden—died January 10, 1778, Uppsala), Swedish naturalist and explorer who was the first to frame principles for defining natural genera and species of organisms and to create a uniform system for naming them (binomial nomenclature). Müller-Wille, Staffan. “Carolus Linnaeus.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Sept. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Carolus-Linnaeus>.

<sup>2</sup> Diogenes Laertius, native of Laerte in Cilicia, was a biographer of ancient Greek philosophers. His *Lives of the Philosophers* (*Philosophy Biol*), in ten books, is still extant and is an important source of information on the development of Greek philosophy. The period when he lived is not exactly known, but it is supposed to have been during the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/dioglaer/>.

eighty-five years. Theophrastus probably was born between 370/372 years before the common era and died in 287 B.C. with an honorable public funeral in Athens. At an early age, he moved from Lesbos to Athens. He became a student of Plato (*Greek: Πλάτων*), one of the most influential philosophers of the western world, and afterward of Aristotle (*Ἀριστοτέλης*).

The last one bequeathed to Theophrastus his library and manuscripts of his writings<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, he was renamed firstly Eufrostos and later to the well-known Theophrastus, because of the godlike manner of his speech (*theos-phrases*)<sup>4</sup>. In 322 B.C., after the death of the founder of the Peripatetic school<sup>5</sup> (*Greek: Περιπατητική Σχολή*) Aristotle, in the 114th Olympiad<sup>6</sup>, Theophrastus became the successor in the leadership of the Lyceum<sup>7</sup> (*Greek: Λύκειον*) for thirty-five years. Diogenes Laertius mentioned that more than two-thousand disciples followed his lectures<sup>8</sup>.

Theophrastus, indeed with his work, *Enquiry into Plants* (*Greek: Περί φυτῶν ἱστορία*) established himself as the father of Botany. In the introduction, of the first English translation of the *Enquiry into Plants* by Sir Arthur Hort, it is mentioned, that all work of Theophrastus runs the principle of classification. In the history of botany, perhaps it is the first attempt at systematic biological classification of plants<sup>9</sup>. Presently, various manuscripts are preserved of the *Enquiry into Plants*. The main manuscripts are from the Codex Urbinas at the Vatican, Codex Parisiensis in Paris, Codices Medicei in Florence, and Codex Vindobonensis in Vienna<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Theophrastus (c. 371—c. 287 B.C.E.) Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/dioglaer/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ierodiakonou, Katerina. "Theophrastus." Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Stanford University, 31 May 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/theophrastus/>.

<sup>5</sup> The name belongs to a series of philosophers of whom Aristotle was the first and by far the most significant. Geographically, the school was located in a sanctuary dedicated to Apollo, called the Lyceum, a public space outside the city walls of Athens but within easy walking distance (the Academy was another such place). A gymnasium was built there; by the end of the 5th century. BCE was a favourite gathering place for young Athenian men. Visiting sophists lectured there, Socrates met his young conversational partners there. As in other similar places, there were 'walks' (peripatoi). Furley, David John. "Peripatetic School." Oxford Classical Dictionary, 8 June 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/classics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-4870>.

<sup>6</sup> 323 B.C

<sup>7</sup> A temple dedicated to Apollo Lyceus, where a Peripatetic school of philosophy was founded.

<sup>8</sup> Laertius, Diogenes. "Lives of Eminent Philosophers 5.2. Theophrastus." Digital Loeb Classical Library, 1925, doi:10.4159/dlcl.diogenes\_laertius-lives\_ eminent\_philosophers\_book\_v\_chapter\_2\_theophrastus.1925.

<sup>9</sup> Theophrastus. "Enquiry into Plants and minor works on odours and weather signs". Translated by Arthur Hort, Loeb Classical Library, 1916.

<sup>10</sup> Theophrastus. "Enquiry into Plants and minor works on odours and weather signs". Translated by Arthur Hort, Loeb Classical Library, 1916.

## **The primary knowledge about the cane, by Theophrastus**

In the book IV (*of the trees and plants special to particular districts and positions*) of *Enquiry into Plants* by Theophrastus and concretely in the chapter: *of the plants peculiar to the lake of Orchomenos (Lake Copais), especially its reeds, and of reeds in general*, Theophrastus referred to the reeds among other plants, mainly from his prime-botanical perspective and classification. He provides us with valuable information from the past that could be useful for the reed makers even nowadays.

Theophrastus, chronicles foremost among others, that the sort of cane which is used for making a reed mouthpiece has some specific characteristics and qualities. Thus, he separated it from other types of canes. He also referred to book IV, about the growing characteristics of the cane according to the weather, climate and soil conditions, cane texture characteristics, the growing areas with a high-quality cane, the specific period of the cane collection and the drying process, that was used more than twenty-two centuries ago. It is noteworthy, to enquire about the significant parts of the detailed description by Theophrastus about the reeds, even though was written during the period of classical antiquity<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Classical antiquity is a historical cultural period that took place between the eighth century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. mainly near the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.