

## The Braun-Blanquet reviews in *Plant Ecology*: in honour of our founding editor, Josias Braun-Blanquet

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We are excited to announce a new contributions section for *Plant Ecology*: The Braun-Blanquet Reviews in Plant Ecology. They will provide in-depth analyses of our current understanding for wide-ranging topics in plant ecology. Braun-Blanquet Reviews will be written by authoritative workers in the subject area, and will help researchers and students to identify new topics for fruitful research, and to more readily place their own research into current context.

We have named the reviews series after Josias Braun-Blanquet in recognition of his significant contribution both to plant ecology in general, and to the history of this journal in particular. Josias Braun-Blanquet was the founding editor of *Plant Ecology* (then known as *Vegetatio*) in 1948 (along with W. C. de Leeuw and R. Tiixen), retaining an editorial leadership role until 1974. He is best known for his 1932 book *Plant Sociology; The Study of Plant Communities*, translated into English from the 1928 German language original, *Pflanzensoziologie*. This work, among others, established Braun-Blanquet as the pre-eminent

European plant community ecologist and leader of the philosophical and methodological approach to plant community study known as the Zurich-Montpellier School of Phytosociology. In his review of this milestone book, the famous American ecologist Gleason (1933) records how he was impressed by its considered contribution to the international ecological literature, discussing difficult subjects clearly and authoritatively.

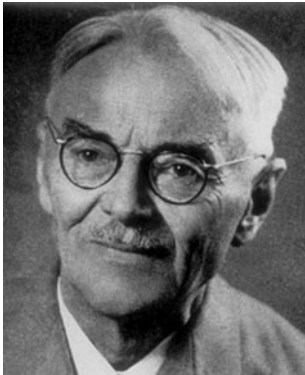
Braun-Blanquet pioneered the classification of vegetation into units (associations) based on floristic composition and the identification of characteristic species. His legacy in the study of plant communities is still clearly visible, especially in Europe, and his role as the founding editor of this journal continues to leave its mark. Podani (2006) considered that his seminal works have greatly influenced field practice and scientific thinking in vegetation science throughout the extra-tropical world. The advantages, and problems, associated with the phytosociological approach to vegetation analysis pioneered by Braun-Blanquet have been reviewed many times (e.g. van der Maarel 1975; Ewald 2003), and inevitably will continue to do so as the vegetation science community increasingly becomes a globalised one.

In his introduction to the first issue of *Vegetatio* in 1948, Braun-Blanquet identified the primary reasons for establishing the journal as being to provide a forum for the consideration of divergent views on the nature of plant communities, and the development of methods for their analysis and interpretation, both in their

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**Plate 1** Josias Braun-Blanquet (image source: [www.Kalipedia.com](http://www.Kalipedia.com))

own right (e.g. approaches to classification and mapping) and in terms of their relationship to environmental drivers—especially soil properties. Among areas of investigation proposed as central to the interests of the new journal were those associated with applied ecology, including the ‘reconstitution of degraded lands’, revealing considerable foresight concerning areas of ecology that would later emerge as major fields of ecology in their own right. We hope that the Braun-Blanquet Reviews will further reinforce the reasons why *Plant Ecology* was founded, by providing expanded opportunity for critical analysis of the current state of plant ecological research and its application.

Manuscripts for consideration as a Braun-Blanquet Review will be solicited by invitation and will also be available via direct contribution, with prospective authors to seek agreement from the journal Reviews Editor concerning suitability of the proposed review prior to submission for consideration. Manuscripts may be up to 9,000 words in length, including references (50 % longer than the current research manuscripts word limit). They will be peer-reviewed in the normal way, with evaluation by a member of the Editorial Board plus expert independent reviewers. The journal will continue also to handle unsolicited

review manuscripts that conform to existing guidelines (these latter will not be Braun-Blanquet Reviews).

We look forward to publishing the first Braun-Blanquet Reviews in *Plant Ecology* and seek to establish them as a prestigious and highly-regarded addition to the international plant ecological literature.

### Biosketch

Josias Braun-Blanquet (born 3rd August 1884, died 20th September 1980) was born in Chur, Switzerland. He undertook his PhD studies at the University of Montpellier, France, on the phytosociology of the southern Cévennes under the supervision of Charles Flahault, graduating in 1915. After lecturing at the University of Zurich in the 1920s he assumed the role of Director of the International Station for Alpine and Mediterranean Geobotany (SIGMA), Montpellier, France, which he held for 50 years, from 1930 until his death in 1980. In 1974 he was awarded the gold medal of the Linnean Society of London. An extended obituary [in French] detailing his contributions to plant ecology and botany was published in *Vegetatio* in 1982 (de Bolos 1982) (Plate 1).

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