

Asa Gray Encyclopedia Article

Asa Gray

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1810-1888

American botanist who was the leading authority on the subject in the United States for four decades. Educated as a physician, Gray became the first professor of botany at Harvard University, where he also supervised the botanical garden and established the herbarium of dried plant specimens. He traveled widely on two continents but collected little himself, preferring to classify plants gathered by others, many of whom he trained. His classic *Manual of Botany*(1848) was often revised by his successors and remained in print long after his death. He was the foremost American advocate for Darwin's theory of evolution.