After nearly thirty years of isolation from each other, the first modern Sino–American botanical expedition was initiated in 1980, with five American botanists participating in a joint expedition to Shennongjia in China’s Hubei province. In a reciprocal activity, five Chinese botanists then joined a field expedition in the United States for more than four months in the spring and summer of 1982. It was a historic expedition—the largest Chinese team to make a field trip outside of China in many years—and it generated a sound mutual understanding and cooperative base for the further development of botanizing activities.

Some ten years later, a series of joint expeditions began in China, organized by NACPEC and a group of Chinese botanical gardens, which have continued for twenty years already. Improving on the first Sino–American botanizing trip, the NACPEC expeditions have covered a very wide range of geographical areas and have had teams composed of members from a number of different disciplines. By all accounts, both the American participants and their Chinese botanical garden hosts have been well satisfied by the efficiency, valuable collections, and the mutually beneficial exchanges of science and technology.

Speaking as a member of the Chinese botanical gardens team, I would like to express my great interest and satisfaction in the project, since it has made a considerable contribution to the ex situ conservation collections in Chinese botanical gardens. First, it increased the accessions and enriched the geographical diversity of the botanical gardens’ living collections. These collections typically consist of relatively few individuals of a given species, and they are often collected from only a few geographic localities. According to modern concepts of ex situ conservation, a well-balanced germplasm collection should consist of numerous individuals from multiple locations. Second, these kinds of collaborative projects can save both money and human resources by sharing plant materials collected with other botanical gardens in different regions, thereby reducing the risk of losing precious plant germplasm. And third, this project provides good opportunities for exchanging scientific information, methodology, and experience.

Personally, I am very interested in knowing that most botanical gardens in the United States have the same team doing the collecting activities in the wild, managing the propagation
Herbarium specimens like this one of *Emmenopterys henryi* are permanent scientific records of individual collections that may well last long beyond the living material. In most cases, multiple herbarium specimens were made of each collection for sharing among the Chinese and American institutions.
Emmenopterys henryi is a rare and endangered tree species native to China. E. H. Wilson first collected this species in 1907 on an expedition for the Arnold Arboretum. He described it as “…one of the most strikingly beautiful trees of the Chinese forests, with its flattish to pyramidate corymb of pure white, rather large flowers and still larger white bracts.” The 1994 expedition to Wudang Shan found and collected *E. henryi* in Hubei (top photo). Some of the seeds from this collection went to the Nanjing Botanical Garden, and the resulting seedlings are seen growing in the NBG propagation house (bottom right). An herbarium specimen from this collection (previous page) shows the persistent bracts and oblong seed capsules. In cultivation, *Emmenopterys henryi* is notorious for taking decades to start blooming, though this precocious specimen (bottom left) at the Quarryhill Botanical Garden in California bloomed at just six years of age.
in the garden, and taking care of the resulting collections. Such a unified approach encourages botanical garden staff to have strong feelings of attachment to the collections. In Chinese botanical gardens, sometimes these three activities were conducted by different groups of people; for example, the taxonomists and their technicians conducted the expeditions in the wild, and the horticulturists and gardeners propagated the plants and maintained the introduced materials. It is also helpful for Chinese botanical gardens to learn to emphasize and to standardize the record system both in the wild and in the garden.

Summarizing the achievements of the cooperative projects, it is obviously very positive, especially as we know that there are so many new plants released. More investigations and more collections are critically important as the planet faces the serious challenge of climate change and ex situ conservation becomes the only effective method for saving plants in the face of relentless urban expansion. I would like to suggest that the NACPEC project should continue its development and move ahead with follow-up research on the plants already collected.

Conserve more plants for humanity!

Have great success in the future!

He Shan an was Director of the Nanjing Botanical Garden in Nanjing, China, from 1983 to 1998.