

# In Memoriam

## Francis Hallé & Peter Raven

The past few months have seen the passing of two giants of the plant world. Green Legacy Hiroshima wishes to honor their many legacies.

In December 2025, the French botanist Francis Hallé passed away. I had first encountered his work in 2011, when a friend offered me his small book *Du Bon Usage des Arbres* — roughly, “On the Good Usage of Trees” — written mainly for policy-makers whom he gently but firmly admonished, for being ignorant about the importance of trees.

From the very first pages, I was touched by his erudition, his humor, and above all his profound respect for all forms of life — especially trees.

Since then, I have been a fan of his tireless efforts to raise awareness about the tremendous reliance of humans on trees, for our own survival. And only a scientist of Francis Hallé’s calibre could dare state the obvious: that without an appreciation of beauty, and without deep understanding of trees’ intelligence — beings unable to move or flee danger, yet capable of surviving and thriving for 350 million years — humanity risks severing itself from the very foundations of life.

Francis Hallé’s final great project, which he pursued till the very end, was the ‘creation’ of a primordial forest in Western Europe. He often repeated that all humanity needed to do for this to happen was... nothing.



Then, in April this year, the renowned American botanist Peter Raven also passed away.

In early 2020, when our EDEN community began planning a campaign to help create botanical gardens for universities in Afghanistan, Ari Novy — one of our core members — suggested we seek Peter’s support.

I was not confident that a scientist of Peter Raven’s stature would have time for a small, entirely pro-bono initiative with no budget, no infrastructure, and no official backing — one nevertheless ambitious enough to dream of creating botanical gardens in a poor and conflict-ridden country like Afghanistan.

I need not have worried. Peter immediately agreed, and until the very end — long after the Taliban returned to power in 2021 and dismantled much of the progress so painfully achieved — he remained steadfastly by the idea and by our side.

Many rightly know Peter Raven as a great botanist; the breadth and depth of his knowledge were breathtaking. But what moved me most was discovering his profound humanity.

In one email, expressing excitement at collaborating with Afghan scientists, he wrote:

*‘...If different peoples can learn to love and care for one another as they should, we might even have a collective chance to achieve global sustainability and the continuation of civilization. We can’t simply let it all be greed.’*

Merci Prof. Halle. Thank you Prof Raven. Thank you for all you did for plants, for forests, and for humanity.

May you both rest in peace — perhaps in a thriving forest somewhere in heaven.

