Abstract:

Among the 34 hotspots of the world the Caucasus is known for its bio-diversity. Georgia is known for diversity of its species, endemism. Meskheti is located in south-western part of Georgia, in middle and south subzones of Adzharia-Trialeti folded system. Today the greater part of Meskheti is covered with mountain-xerophilous plants, while forests correspond mainly to that of south slopes of Adzharia-Imereti range, north slopes of Arsian mountain ridge and Erusheti plateau. Current arrangement of forest plants in Meskheti enables us to suppose that once, mountains of South Transcaucasia were covered with forests, and forest of Kolkhida type dominated in Meskheti (palaeobotanic data and historical materials). The research offers systematic, floristic, botanical-geographic, topo-ecologic analysis of arboreal plants of Meskheti forests. Compendium of forest flora of this region was developed. The syllabus consists of 816 species, which are grouped in 339 types and 78 families, inclusive ferns which are presented by 23 species/varieties; gymnosperm- by 11, angiospermous by 782 inclusive, 675 species belonging to dicotyledonous ones, 107 – to monocotyledonous. Syllabus contains 150 species of arboreal plants, which belong to 37 families and 65 types. Analysis has shown rich diversity and belonging of Meskheti forests to Kolkhida, Caucasus, Mediterranean, Asia Minor, Caucasus–Front Asia as well as to European, holarctic and palaearctic geographic types. In all, Kolkhida geographic type is presented by 37, Caucasus - 137, Asia Minor-42, Caucasus-Western Asia - 128, palaearctic -92, holarctic-74 species. With the view of florogenesis Kolkhida, Caucasus, Mediterranean and palaearctic types are of specific significance. Forests of Meskheti are rich in Caucasus (60) and Georgia (25) endemic species and the whole dendroflora of Meskheti is considered relict.

Key Terms: Caucasus, Meskheti, bio-diversity, forest