

# Ludwig Jungermann (1572 – 1653)

Ludwig Jungermann was born in Leipzig, Germany, on 4 July 1572, the youngest son of Casper Jungermann (1531–1606), who taught law at the university. His mother Ursula Camerarius (1539–1604) was the daughter of Joachin Camerarius the Elder, a close family friend and associate of humanist and religious reformer Philipp Melancthon. His elder brother Joachin Jungermann (1561–1591), a promising botanist, died on his way to Greece and the Levant.

Around 1600, after completing his medical studies at Jena, Altdorf and Giessen and becoming known for his knowledge of plants, Ludwig Jungermann went to Nuremberg where he catalogued the plants growing in the vicinity of Altdorf, and in 1610 took the doctor of physic degree. He also wrote the bulk of the text for Basilius Besler's *Hortus Eystettensis* (1613), a work commissioned by Konrad von Gemmingen, the bishop of Eichstätt in Bavaria, to record in engravings and text all the ornamental flowers, herbs, vegetables and exotic plants in his garden. Jungermann's descriptions of the plants were in Latin and the captions often utilised the first two or three salient words, predating the binomial system of Linnaeus. Although not published until a year after the bishop's death, *Hortus Eystettensis* was regarded as the most impressive work on botany to that date, and made many unusual and beautiful plants better known.

There were already botanical gardens (*hortus medicus*) in Leipzig (1580), Heidelberg (1597) and Eichstätt (1600), but Giessen's is the oldest still in its original location. In 1605 Ludwig V of Hesse-Darmstadt founded the Lutheran university at Giessen, mainly for the education of pastors and civil servants. It also had a medical faculty, and two years later he donated some of his parkland at the old castle for a botanical garden. Jungermann laid out an area of around 1,200 square metres for a *hortus medicus*; he was its first curator and from 1614–1625 he was professor of anatomy and botany at Giessen. His skills were in demand and he had already refused calls to universities in Rostok and Rinteh when, in 1616, he turned down an offer to succeed Matthias de l'Obel as superintendent of Lord Zouch's physic garden at Hackney, London, and *botanicus regius* to King James I. In 1623 he published a flora of Giessen, and a catalogue of the herbarium, but both have since been lost. When the turmoil of the Thirty Years War forced Jungermann to leave Giessen he returned to Altdorf in Bavaria and accepted a similar professorship there. There, too, he led the creation of a new (public) botanical garden, which became one of the finest in Germany.

Considered by his scientific contemporaries as "vir botanicum nemini secundus" (in botany second to none), Ludwig Jungermann once commented that he would marry only if he was brought a plant he could not identify. He died on 7 June 1653, "unhitched"! Heinrich Bernhard Rupp in 1616 perpetuated his name in the liverwort genus *Jungermannia* in the family Jungermanniaceae, and Linnaeus later adopted the name.



## *Jungermannia hodgsoniae*

"In the early stages of nomenclature, the name Jungermannia was applied to most of the Hepaticae by way of distinguishing them from mosses. As the former became gradually divided up into generic groups the name *Jungermannia* was retained for one genus only, and even this, for a time, gave way to the name *Apozia*, but reappeared in 1957." (Amy Hodgson, 1945)

Today, *Jungermannia* is a small genus of leafy liverworts with more or less rounded or oblique leaves, virtually no underleaves and an inflated perianth, globose or cylindrical, which is terminal on the leading shoot. We have three species in New Zealand. *Jungermannia hodgsoniae* forms bright green patches up to 30 cm diameter on banks, and is easily recognised by the round shape of its leaves. On open banks it has a prostrate habit, but when they are crowded the stems grow upright and the general appearance is quite different. It is found on damp banks and boggy ground in open, often subalpine situations throughout New Zealand, but is apparently common only in Westland.

PHOTO: Shirley Kerr