

world has gone thankfully back to *Chrysanthemum*, this work still espouses *Dendranthema*, and the technicalities of gynoeceum position in the *Rosaceae* seem to have been skimmed over without employing the usual terms epi-, peri- and hypogynous. It is clear that many sections were written by acknowledged authorities and the local gymnosperm expert at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh was very impressed by the accuracy and detail of that account, even for quite unfamiliar species. The entries for many families and genera are supplemented by brief accounts of taxa less commonly encountered, making this work very comprehensive.

Following the systematic section there is an excellent and very thorough glossary with some useful illustrations, mercifully free from the awkward abbreviations noted above. Some of the entries would have benefited from examples, such as those for 'specific epithet', 'subspecies' and 'variety', which might be a bit abstruse for the newcomer. The definition of 'cultivar' is rather weak as it makes no mention of the essential criteria of a cultivar (distinctness, uniformity and stability) and employs the nomenclaturally vague terms 'race' and 'strain'; also the abbreviation 'cv' is no longer sanctioned under the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (2004). There is a useful diagrammatic 'locator-guide' directing the reader to the appropriate illustrations, among which were one or two inaccuracies such as the fruits of the rose-hip (p. 796) being labelled 'seeds', a common pit-fall for the unwary student.

The section giving derivations of specific names (more correctly epithets) is very useful and will provide much interest and enlightenment. This is followed by a mind-boggling list of references, no fewer than 1641 having been consulted!

At 4.5 kg this book is a substantial weight to lift, let alone carry about, and dropping it could be disastrous, not just for the book! If a second edition were ever contemplated, the publisher might consider splitting it into two volumes as was done for the *RHS A-Z Encyclopaedia of Garden Plants* (2003). It is an unusual pleasure to say that the price is very reasonable indeed; at just short of \$60 (about £31.50), it is astonishingly good value and well within reach of the private bookshelf. Make sure it is on yours.

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Rubiaceae of Thailand: A Pictorial Guide to Indigenous and Cultivated Genera.

Christian Puff, Kongkanda Chayamarit & Voradol Chamchumroon. Bangkok: The Forest Herbarium, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Conservation. 2005. viii + 245 pp. ISBN 974 436 142 2. €40.00 or US\$50.00 (hardback).

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Learning the plants in a new regional flora is always a challenge. Learning the plants in a tropical flora where no one knows them is Extreme Plant Taxonomy. This problem has been approached in various ways over the years: through general, manual-style floras (e.g. *Flora of Bhutan*); detailed floras of particular small sites within the larger region (e.g. *The Flora of Barro Colorado Island*); and detailed floras for the entire region covering selected, carefully studied groups but presenting no information at all about the rest of

the plants (e.g. the *Flora of Ecuador* and *Flore d'Afrique Centrale* fascicles). Another approach now seen with increasing frequency for regions where the species are not well known is the genus-level overview of the flora (e.g. *A Field Guide to the Families and Genera of Woody Plants of Northwestern South America*, *Generic Tree Flora of Madagascar*). Puff and co-authors have now compiled a genus-level reference for one family of plants in one very poorly known flora, the *Rubiaceae* of Thailand.

Inventories of moist tropical forests generally find that *Rubiaceae* worldwide comprise 5–8% of this flora, and are particularly well represented in the eye-level, insect-pollinated, collector-attracting shrub and small tree component. Puff *et al.* here draw on their deep knowledge of the *Rubiaceae* and extensive field work to present a masterful scientific compilation of the *Rubiaceae* genera known from this region, along with an absolutely delicious set of photographs that illustrate the important morphological features. A concise, thorough overview of the *Rubiaceae* of the region is given in several chapters that survey habit, morphology, floral biology, common ornamentals, and economically important members of the family; then each genus is given at least two pages of figures, technical description, and commentary. The genus descriptions are state-of-the-art, incorporating the latest literature as well as original field observations, and are all parallel and detailed enough to allow identification to genus of a plant in hand. The *Rubiaceae* species of this region are so little known that in many cases only a very general species number can be estimated for Thailand (e.g. *Saprosma*, *Psychotria*), and in some cases even the plants photographed cannot yet be identified to species (e.g. *Urophyllum*). The genus overview here thus provides an essential framework for all the species-level and exploration work yet to be done for this *Rubiaceae* flora.

The photographs could equally well be considered the main content of the book. These range from excellent to breathtaking, in both the exotic forms of the plants and the expertise needed to find many of them; and for the true *Rubiaceae* aficionado, some of these are, well, almost pornographic (in the old-fashioned, artistic way; e.g. page 49 fig. C; page 59 figs. E, F; page 191 fig. F). Colour images of living tropical plants have become increasingly available and scientific in coverage in recent years, in both books (e.g. *Flora da Reserva Ducke*) and Internet resources (e.g. *La Flora Digital de La Selva*). Such image sets provide a broad additional dimension of knowledge and documentation for tropical plants. Puff *et al.* have contributed significantly to this documentation through both this book and the model it presents for similar studies of other families.

The size (17 × 24 × 2 cm) and weight of the book are well judged for actual use, and it is beautifully formatted (no narrow columns!) and printed and bound on very good quality stock. It is also completely bilingual throughout, in English and Thai; I am unable to comment on the accuracy and editing of the Thai text, but it is attractively laid out.

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