

A Bibliography of Conifers – selected literature on taxonomy and related disciplines of the Coniferales, and especially of the families Cupressaceae (with Taxodiaceae) and Pinaceae. A. Farjon. Koeltz Scientific Books, D-6240 Königstein, Federal Republic of Germany. 1990. Pp. 129. ISBN 3 87429 306 8. Forming volume 122 of *Regnum Vegetabile*; ISSN 0080-0694. DM 110.

This selective bibliography forms an essential compilation of taxonomic references to the groups given in the subtitle – both living and fossil. After a short introduction, the main text consists of 2130 separate references (some being further cross-referenced) arranged in alphabetical order of author. Short notes are included on the taxonomic scope of the references when these are not obvious from the title. The work ends with an index of botanical names included in the bibliography. This comprehensive work reflects not only the author's great knowledge of the relevant literature but also his long term commitment to the study of this important group of plants.

Pinaceae – drawings and descriptions of the genera *Abies*, *Cedrus*, *Pseudolarix*, *Keteleeria*, *Nothotsuga*, *Tsuga*, *Cathaya*, *Pseudotsuga*, *Larix* and *Picea*. A. Farjon. Koeltz Scientific Books, D-6240 Königstein, Federal Republic of Germany. 1990. Pp. xii + 330; 117 illustrations (mostly line drawings); 124 maps. ISBN 3 87429 298 3. Forming volume 121 of *Regnum Vegetabile*; ISSN 0080-0694. DM 260.

This work, lavishly illustrated by the author, covers 10 genera (including 116 taxa) of the family Pinaceae, excluding the genus *Pinus* which had already been treated by the author (Farjon, 1984). No details of cultivation of species are given.

The introduction covers the taxonomic history of the family, a family description, a discussion of the inter-generic relationships and detailed keys to the sub-families and genera; further information is given on ecology and distribution. Introductions to each of the ten genera follow a similar format. The species entries comprise a double spread with a full page of detailed line drawings and a page with a detailed description, notes on ecology, distribution and a distribution map. The taxonomic section is followed by a section on leaf anatomy, with 31 drawings of transverse leaf sections from a range of genera and species; the work is completed with a comprehensive glossary, bibliography and index.

The author has achieved a consistently high standard in this series, producing scholarly works that are thoroughly researched and contain a substantial element of original research; the views expressed are, of course, personal and the taxonomic status of many of the taxa will always be the subject of varying opinion. Illustrating such a large number of taxa based on herbarium and photographic material is in itself a major achievement, and the results are accurate and useful.

The use of a world map for all species has made the task of plotting taxa of limited distribution unnecessarily obscure, though in certain instances enlarged inserts of the relevant regions are also given. The layout is organised so that illustrations face their corresponding text, which leads to the slightly unfortunate result of a number of blank pages.

Reference: Farjon, A. (1984). *Pines – drawings and descriptions of the genus Pinus*. E.J. Brill, Leiden.

Martin F. Gardner

Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners – a handbook on the origin and meaning of the botanical names of some cultivated plants. W.T. Stearn. Cassell Publishers Limited, London. Pp 363. ISBN 0-304-34149-5. £16.99.

To the enthusiastic gardener Latin plant names are often a source of confusion and irritation but, once the system and its rules have been explained, many derive a sense of satisfaction from learning and using the words. However, understanding the principles of the system in one thing, knowing the meaning and derivation of the words is another. While *albus*, *japonicus* and *foetidus* may be obvious, what do *macranthus* and *amplexicaulae* mean, what is the origin of the generic name *Corydalis* and who is being commemorated in *Elsholtzia*? The answer to these and 6,000 similar questions about plant names may be found in Stearn's recently published *Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners*.

The original idea for the book came from Archibald William Smith (1899–1962), to whom the present work is dedicated. Smith was not a botanist nor even a gardener originally, but started his working life in the Army where he had a remarkable career. He served on the Western Front, rode with the Cossacks and fought on the North-West Frontier. After the First World War he worked for his uncle's firm in Burma extracting teak by means of elephants. During the Second World War he was employed by MI5, after which he returned to the USA where he had settled in 1934. Here he devoted his life to gardening and to charitable work, but he also had time to return to his life-long fascination with the meaning and derivation of plant names. Originally this work was undertaken to satisfy his own curiosity, but later he hoped that it might become a source of reference for like-minded gardeners. He was encouraged to publish the work by Peter Green (then of the Arnold Arboretum, later of Kew) and his book *A Gardener's Book of Plant Names* was published posthumously in 1963.

Smith's fascination was obviously shared by many gardeners for his book proved so popular that a second edition was soon needed. In revising the original work Stearn found that it contained many errors, not so much the fault of Smith, but more through the accumulation and repetition of past errors. The second edition of the work entitled *A Gardener's Dictionary of Plant Names* was published in 1972, in which two chapters on botanical and vernacular names were added. The present edition includes more entries and an expansion of some existing entries, whereas some material considered irrelevant has been omitted. The book is packed with a wealth of fascinating material and is scholarly yet written in an entertaining way; as such it bridges the gap between botany and horticulture and will be an invaluable companion to gardeners, students, writers and historians.

David A.H. Rae