

BOOK REVIEW

A Family Identification Pocketbook. After many years out of print, Davis & Cullen's little book makes a welcome reappearance in a completely revised second edition.* As in the original edition the work 'attempts to provide a means of identification for all Angiosperm families native or cultivated, out-of-doors or under glass, in north temperate regions' (the southern limit being taken as 30°N). Extensive revision of most of the text has been made to take into account the changes in accepted classification which have taken place in the fifteen years since the original version appeared and to amplify various sections. The key itself has been changed from the indented type to the bracket form generally more popular with students and the total number of families which key-out has been increased from 260 to 272.

A notable feature of the book is a 13-page section on usage of terms to ensure that the keys are correctly used. Here a concise treatment of hypogyny, perigyny, epigyny, placentation and aestivation is given with the support of an abundance of good figures. In dealing with the relationships of floral parts the authors diverge somewhat from the classical view, and indeed they provide a table comparing their usage with that of the older literature. Their usage is unambiguous and practical, although it jars on those whose floral morphology has a traditional basis to find the corolla and androecium of *Primula* described as borne on a perigynous zone and those of *Viburnum* on an epigynous zone (since in all cases the zone below the insertion of epipetalous stamens is treated as an area of adnation rather than as true corolla).

Also preliminary to the keys are sections on examining the plant (running through what to observe for all characters) and use of the key itself. Both of these are extremely valuable to students, who can in fact learn a great deal of useful information from the 24 initial pages of this book.

The keys themselves are strictly dichotomous and bring out the families in 13 groups (followed by keys to the segregate families of Saxifragaceae *s.l.* and Liliaceae *s.l.*). We put the keys to the test with 24 species chosen to give a reasonable range of families and also to include a number of difficult examples. Of this total three species (belonging to *Greyia*, *Lantana* and *Streptocarpus*) failed to track out, in all cases because their placentation was not as stated, while the great majority of others ran through very smoothly indeed: such a level of success speaks highly for keys of so all-encompassing a nature. Our findings were confirmed by the experience of the first-year students of the Diploma in Horticulture (Edinburgh) course who, although taxonomically inexperienced, have found the keys easy and accurate in use.

Following the keys, terse descriptions are given of all families apart from the segregates of Saxifragaceae and Liliaceae *s.l.* The families and orders are listed within the ten super-orders used in Stebbins's classification; this represents one of the revisions of this edition as in the previous the informal groups of Benson's older system were used. In dealing with a small number of families the authors have deviated from Stebbins's system and these are clearly indicated in a table.

The book ends with a short section on further identification, giving the student a very useful bibliography for this purpose, and a concise glossary.

It is difficult to find any points to criticize in this practical little book. It forms an admirable complement to the recently published *Flowering Plants of the World* (V. H. Heywood ed.) reviewed on p. 339; both works use Stebbins's system of classification and Davis & Cullen supplies the keys for identification while Heywood gives family descriptions and beautiful illustrations. *Flowering Plants of the World* has been described as 'the botanical bargain of the year': the same can hardly be said for *The identification of flowering plant families*—the hardback version costs £6, no mean price for a pocketbook of 113 pages (the first edition cost 12s 6d in 1965); fortunately the paperback version represents better value at £1.95.

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* *The identification of flowering plant families* (2nd edn) by P. H. Davis & J. Cullen. 113 pages, 8 figs. 1979. Cambridge University Press. Price £6 (hardback), £1.95 (paperback).