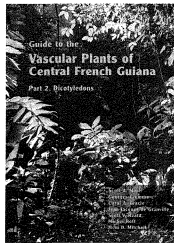


BOOK REVIEW

With this issue, *Selbyana* introduces a Book Review section to inform readers of new and noteworthy publications. Readers are invited to suggest titles for review. Book reviews will appear occasionally, as titles of interest become available.



GUIDE TO THE VASCULAR PLANTS OF CENTRAL FRENCH GUIANA PART 2. DICOTYLEDONS

SCOTT A. MORI, GEORGES CREMERS, CAROL A. GRACIE,
JEAN-JACQUES DE GRANVILLE, SCOTT V. HEALD,
MICHEL HOFF AND JOHN D. MITCHELL

2002. 776 p., \$150.00. Hardback. 128 color plates, 326 black & white figures. Glossary. Index to Scientific Names. The New York Botanical Garden Press. Memoirs of the New York Botanical Garden Vol. 76, Part 2.

We are a very long way from Kansas. One of the first botany textbooks I ever had was already badly antiquated, having been written in Kansas nearly a century earlier. It spoke of palms as rare and unimportant plants. The first book of this flora, Vol. 76, Part 1, by Mori and coauthors, published in 1997, covered the palms, other monocots, ferns, and gymnosperms; and thus the present book, Vol. 76, Part 2 deals with dicots.

Floras have several uses, such as a tool for identifications and a learning device to broaden our knowledge of plants. Any work put together by many authors, covering a large, poorly known tropical flora, must have some unevenness. It is a tribute to the authors and editors of the present work that this professional and attractive work hides any such problems very well. The plants are strange to most of us, even if we think we have knowledge of other parts of the Neotropics. We like to think of Neotropical plants as having a unity, the familiar families, genera, even the many species likely to show up in Florida, Mexico, Brazil, or Costa Rica. Add a rich dose of local endemics in the same alliances. These dicots of French Guiana, however, can be surprisingly different. A casual impression is that they often deviate in their fruits.

The flora covers 112 families of dicots (counting legumes as three), with 1483 species. Some are introduced weeds, but not many, since the region tends to be mostly rain forest. Several families that are more or less standards to north temperate botanists play minor roles. For examples, see Apiaceae, Brassicaceae, Caryophyllaceae (limited to

one weed in stark contrast to Europe), Rosaceae, Lamiaceae, Campanulaceae, and Malvaceae. Asteraceae has only 21 genera. Ericaceae, with three genera of one species each, is a shock, as compared to those in Costa Rica, India, or Florida. Lauraceae is well represented, as one might expect, but *Persea* is missing. Not even a stray avocado tree?

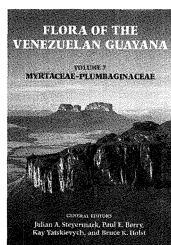
Nurserymen, weed-control people, and average gardeners in Florida will be surprised at one Asteraceae, *Sphagneticola trilobata* (L.) Pruski. It is none other than what we all know too well as *Wedelia trilobata* (L.) Hitchc. Not a sphagnum lover, it thrives in high alkalinity and salt; but a plant name is a label, nothing more.

It would be nice to test the keys and other ID aids with preserved samplings of this flora. Since this is not immediately feasible, I can only say that wordings seem cleancut and well contrasted. Most characters are the sort that can be easy to see and compare. It is obvious that careful professional thought went into the construction of the keys. The illustrations, both photos and drawings, are also well done, well chosen, and attractive. Lest some readers think that all this good work ought to be just what is expected in a flora, one had best correct "expected" to "hoped for," but not invariably achieved.

We are indeed a long way from Kansas, on an adventure through the French Guiana rain forest.

—John Beckner, Curator, Orchid Identification Center, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 811 South Palm Avenue, Sarasota, Florida 34236-7726, USA.

BOOK REVIEW



FLORA OF THE VENEZUELAN GUAYANA VOLUME 7. MYRTACEAE-PLUMBAGINACEAE

P.E. BERRY, K. YATSKIEVYCH, AND B.K. HOLST, EDS.

2003. 765 p. \$85. Hardback, color dust jacket. 646 black & white figures. Map. Dischotomous keys. Glossary of Orchid Morphology. Missouri Botanical Garden Press.

The *Flora of the Venezuelan Guayana* is a synoptical treatment of the native and naturalized vascular plants that occur in the states of Amazonas, Bolívar, and Delta Amacuro. This area of southern Venezuela includes the “tepuis” (tabletop mountains) known for their high plant endemism. Volume 7, Myrtaceae-Plumbaginaceae, is a continuation of the excellent series on the flora of this unique botanically rich area of the globe. The 765-page volume includes 18 families, 221 genera, and 1338 species, with 646 line drawings. Each family includes a key to the genera and separate keys for each genus.

This volume of the flora will be of particular interest to orchidologists, since 420 pages are devoted to orchids and cover 732 orchid species in 157 genera with 343 orchid drawings. The orchid section is written by well-known orchidologists: Germán Carnevali, Ivón M. Ramírez-Morillo, Gustavo A. Romero-González, Carlos A. Vargas, and Ernesto Foldats. The Orchidaceae section includes a short history of botanical exploration in the region and an excellent introduction to the family. An illustrated glossary of terms used in descriptive morphology of orchids is included in this section, since many of these terms are unique to the family. This is not to

exclude the other families described in Volume 7, which is well illustrated by the noted Venezuelan botanical artist Bruno Manara and others.

Few negative comments can be made about this comprehensive hardbound volume. Other than the five color photos on the book jacket, illustrations are black and white. A few color plates would have added interest (and expense) to the book. Additionally the exsiccatae lists (specimens examined) are not included in the flora. They are available, however, from the Missouri Botanical Garden.

The book is a “must-have” purchase for orchidologists who do not own *Venezuelan Orchids Illustrated* or *Orchids of Venezuela: An Illustrated Field Guide* by G.C.K. Dunsterville and L.A. Garay. Of course the updated nomenclature makes this volume a useful addition to these classic reference works. Additionally Volume 7 of the flora is a worthwhile reference for neotropical botanists interested in this geologically ancient part of northern South America.

—Wesley E. Higgins, *Head of Systematics,*
Marie Selby Botanical Gardens,
811 South Palm Avenue,
Sarasota, Florida 34236-7726 USA