

BOOK REVIEWS

The European Garden Flora. 1. Pteridophyta; Gymnospermae; Angiospermae - Alismataceae to Iridaceae. Edited by S.M. Walters & 9 others. Cambridge University Press. \$Aust. 196.50. (hardcover)

Here is the first volume of an ambitious project; the publication of a many-volumed Flora dealing exhaustively with plants cultivated for amenity in Europe. The series is intended as a scientifically accurate identification manual for all those species likely to be found in general collections, whether grown out of doors or under glass.. Specialist collections, crops, and weeds are excluded.

I have Volume 1 in front of me now, having browsed right through it with considerable delight, and not a little awe! Volume 1 deals with the Pteridophyta (ferns and fern allies), Gymnospermae (pines, podocarps, ginkgos, cycads, etc.), and Angiospermae (flowering plants). Volume 2 (already published, 1984) completes the monocotyledons; volume 3 and subsequent volumes - a goodly number of subsequent volumes, judging by the number of species to be covered - will treat the dicotyledons.

The problems of identifying plants in cultivation are many and varied. For example, they originate from diverse places all over the world, many of them from areas where wild floras are not well known. Many cultivated plants are products of long histories of selection and hybridisation, some of it intended, some unintentional results of cultivation and propagation methods, of distinctive garden environments, and of the juxtaposition of species which would never meet in the wild. Many wrongly applied names become entrenched in the Nursery Trade, creating dreadful confusion. All of these problems are met head on in this volume. The series represents a new and very impressive undertaking. The right editorial decisions seem to have been made for precision and clarity without hiding the fact that many taxonomic and nomenclatural problems still need resolving.

An obvious way for a New Zealand botanist or gardener to test content and accuracy is to focus one's critical gaze on whatever New Zealand plants are represented. A lot are, but I had to look hard to find significant errors, mostly to do with place of origin and native range (e.g. see *Pyrrosia serpens*, *Blechnum patersonii*, *Adiantum cunninghamii*, *Potamogeton crispus*, and *Cordyline baueri*). The nomenclature of the New Zealand species gives this reader confidence that nomenclature throughout has been painstakingly researched; the reason for many decisions are given succinctly with references, and where this means a familiar name is pushed aside, sufficient synonymy is provided to make sense of other horticultural literature. Thus, incidentally, the index would lead you to our native bog pine by way of either *Dacrydium* or *Halocarpus bidwillii*. Provision of common names would have invited

chaos in a land as linguistically diverse as Europe, and, wisely, Latin names alone have been used at every taxonomic level.

The hardiness ratings for the continental climates of Europe are intriguing to a New Zealand reader; the plants are often far less hardy than one would imagine. I hesitated at *Arthropodium cirratum* and *A. candidum* which are both rated at G 1, that is, needing a cool glasshouse even in southern Europe.

The Pteridophyta are rather liberally illustrated in black and white, the rest of the volume less so, but numerous references to illustrations elsewhere in the literature are provided. The book is liberally endowed with keys too, at family, genus, and species level. The textual content I consider to be a model of concise, readable prose, at just the right level of technicality, replete with information, including the essentials of propagation and cultivation. The three-column lay-out of text is easy to read, although some lines are oddly cut as if an unsupervised young computer was set loose on the script.

A couple of hundred dollars for the first of a series of volumes is a lot of money. Is the book relevant to New Zealand? It certainly is; I hope at least some copies end up on library shelves accessible to people working at all levels of botany and horticulture. At the same time it is a specialist, technical, reference work, a pretty remarkable one in my opinion, but not what the average home gardener would want to pay hundreds of dollars for. Will a similar New Zealand or Australian or even Southern Hemisphere Flora ever appear? It is decades away, I imagine. Meanwhile, this fills the gap admirably.

Hugh Wilson

Vegetation of Egmont National Park New Zealand. By Bruce D. Clarkson. Illustrations by J. Bruce Irwin. National Park Scientific Series No 5. Science Information Publishing Centre 1986. Wellington. 95 pp., 4 pp. colour plates, and 16 pp. illustrations; with NZMS 169 Egmont National Park map Ed 7 in back pocket; price \$29.95.

When in Auckland in May my wife and I spent a day with Lucy Moore at her home in Warkworth. She asked if I was thinking of having the 'Vegetation' of Mt Egmont by Clarkson and Irwin reviewed for this journal. Having assured me that it was a good publication and well worth while running a review, she then offered to write one for us herself. Unfortunately Lucy entered hospital only a few days after our visit and had not, by then, made a start on it. Lucy however had written to both the Bruces and they have both kindly given permission to quote from their letters.