

Book Reviews

Plant Resources of South-East Asia 15(2) Cryptogams: Ferns and Fern Allies. Edited by W. P. de Winter (Wageningen, The Netherlands) and V. B. Amoroso (Bukidnon, Mindanao, The Philippines). Backhuys Publishers, Leiden, The Netherlands. 2003. 264 pp. 19 × 28 cm. £75.00. ISBN 90-5782-128-1.

This book is Part 2 of Volume 15 of the multivolume handbook on useful plants of South-East Asia, PROSEA (Plant Resources of South-East Asia), targeted to educators, researchers, extension programs, and industry. This particular PROSEA volume is the result of extensively researched and compiled information on the uses of ferns and fern allies (Pteridophytes), but it also includes the Bryophytes (mosses) of South-East Asia. The text is divided into “Introduction”, “Alphabetical treatment of genera and species” (of Pteridophytes), and “Bryophytes”.

The Introduction is extensive (pp 13–46), discussing the diversity and generalized distribution of the pteridophytes, their importance as sources of food, vegetables, flavorings, medicine, structural materials, ornamentals, and other uses, their properties (chemistry and pharmacology), their taxonomic classification and morphology by examining the various stages of the life cycle, their ecology, their propagation methods and genetics, and a concluding statement on future prospects. The bulk of the book comprises a compilation of 13 genera and 94 species of Pteridophytes (pp 49–192) and three genera of Bryophytes (including seven species; pp 193–200). Each compilation represents a small paper or monographic treatment authored by specialists of each taxonomic group. Each entry of the monographic treatment consists of a genus (an account summarizing a number of species) or a species entry (if only one species of a genus is treated). Information for a genus or species is presented in the following categories in a consistent manner: citation of the original publication of a genus or a species, the family name, major species, and synonyms (for species), vernacular names, origin and geographic distribution, production and international trade, properties, taxonomic description, other botanical information, ecology, propagation and planting, husbandry, diseases and pests, harvesting, yield, handling after harvest, genetic resources and

breeding, prospects, and literature cited listed in full (author, year of publication, title of paper, and place of publication for a journal article, or name of a book and the publisher, and pagination). The text of the Bryophytes section consists of the “Introduction” (botany, ecology, uses, prospects, references) and “Alphabetical treatment of mosses genera and species”; hepatics are not covered.

The main list of the references (“Literature”, pp 201–219) follows the text of the Bryophytes, listing alphabetically the last name of the first author. For some monographic treatments (genus or species), the listed references under each treatment do not appear in the Literature, while for some others, they are listed here. Following “Acknowledgments”, a list of acronyms of organizations, a glossary, a list of sources of illustrations, an index to scientific plant names, and an index to vernacular plant names, in that order, are provided. Minor oversights are found, such as the failure to list “Burkill, 1935” (cited on p 17) and “Croft, 1999” (cited on p 20) in the main list of the references. It is possible that these references may be listed within one of the monographic treatments, but it will require a special effort for one to find them. These minor lapses, however, do not detract from the usefulness of this otherwise well-prepared, beautifully presented treatise.

In conclusion, this monographic compilation of information on the economic uses of Pteridophytes and Bryophytes of South-East Asia is of immense value and should lead to more optimal utilization of the plant resources of this geographic region. This highly valuable book is recommended to fern and bryophyte enthusiasts, be they researchers, educators, or professionals, especially those whose primary interest lies in their economic importance. The book should also enrich any collection in both private and institutional libraries.

Djaja D. Soejarto

*University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Illinois*

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