

Book Review: Tan, Benito C. and Ho Boon-Chuan. 2008. **A Guide to the Mosses of Singapore.** Photographs by Lim Yao-Hui. Science Centre Singapore. 149 pp. Price: SGD\$ 5.50.

Finally it is here! After many months of waiting, I have received my copy of the book sent by post from a good friend in Singapore. It arrived yesterday and I have not stopped until I read it all. It is a great complement to my other bryology books and the first to cover tropical mosses. Co-authored by the world renown bryologist Dr. B.C. Tan, it expertly covers the species of mosses found in Singapore. And yet it is written in simple flowing English and accompanied by a wealth of clear colour photographs which will be enjoyed by both newcomers to moss biology and more seasoned bryologists alike. The first few pages are in fact dedicated to newcomers in moss biology with a description on morphology, life cycles and general information about these tiny green plants.

Over 150 species of indigenous mosses have been recorded in Singapore of which two are endemic to the island at present. The book contains a checklist of all these species with useful comments on habitat, distribution and survival status. As can be expected of a small book, not all of these mosses are described in detail. However over 56% of the book is dedicated to portraits of selected species. In this section the more common species are described in detail, accompanied by photographs of habit and morphology, which would allow the amateur bryologist to make an identification even in the field. Selected rare and unusual species are also described here in detail to make this a good cross section of the species to be found in the region. To make this chapter even more enjoyable the descriptions include the various uses of these mosses. This means that enthusiasts from the aquarium hobby, the bonsai hobby, and traditional medicine have been offered a good fodder for their interests.

The habitat and locations in Singapore have been also been listed for each species, which will help amateur bryologists find them easily. They will also find the keys to the families and genera of Singapore mosses in the book useful. If needed, there is a short description on how to collect and preserve mosses for later identification or study by specialists working at the herbarium and plant museum overseas. Finally the glossary complements the other sections by serving as a quick reference to the technical terms used in the book.

The Guide to the Mosses of Singapore serves as both a wonderful armchair read as well as a practical field guide. My only problem with it is that it has aggravated my desire to come over to do moss "hunting" in the island country called Singapore.

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