

The Names of Plants

By D. Gledhill. 1985. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. viii + 159 pp., illus. Cloth U.S.\$34.50; paper U.S.\$9.95.

The author's aims in writing this book were to provide interesting accounts of the history and procedures of naming plants, and the meanings of plant names. It was written for all those interested in plants, from casual gardeners to professional botanists. Although it may seem to be a daunting task to appeal to such a wide audience, I feel that Gledhill has accomplished his goal admirably. The entire book is written in such a way that a person with limited botanical background can understand it, yet it does not come across as trivial or boring to the professional. Needless to say, this is not a complete glossary of plant names, nor is it a dictionary of botanical terminology. Rather, the author presents a survey of the nature and problems of plant nomenclature, beginning with the reasons for naming plants, the need for a standardized system of nomenclature, the problems with common names, etc. He then deals briefly with the fascinating history of the development of nomenclatural systems, beginning with the writings of Aristotle and Theophrastus, and moving through the systems of the Middle Ages (doctrine of signatures, etc.), to the binomial system established by Linnaeus and followed to this day. It is commendable that he has been able to include all of the most important developments in an interesting and readable fashion. Some background is also provided on the nature of the species problem in plants, and he puts the processes of taxonomic botany (and the name changes that are often required as a result of revisions) into perspective.

Two chapters are dedicated to discussions of the history and development of the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* and the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants*. These are complicated documents, and Gledhill has focussed on the most important points, avoiding the technical and often legalistic arguments that come into play in plant

nomenclature. Anyone interested in the technical details is referred to the Codes. There is also a very useful summary of the rules of Latin grammar as they relate to the formation of names. There are more detailed books available on the subject, but the account given in this book (well supplied with examples) covers the subject quite well.

The largest, and perhaps most useful, section in the book is the glossary. Here, the author lists a large number of Latin and latinized botanical names (mainly specific epithets, prefixes, and suffixes, but also some generic names). It is selective in that it includes names that are readily definable, descriptive, or have their basis in mythology. Many obscure, arbitrary, or undefinable names are excluded. There also seems to be a bias toward Eurasian geographical names, but most North American geographical epithets have obvious derivations, so this is not a serious omission.

I have only one complaint about this book. Scattered throughout the glossary are a series of illustrations that serve to define certain plant structures. The illustrations themselves are perfectly adequate, but there is no way to find out where they are without flipping through the pages (there is no list of figures in the table of contents). If a reader wished to determine the meaning of an epithet such as "peltatum", it would be a simple matter to check the alphabetical glossary, and there is a reference to Figure 5(d), but no page number is given (and the figure is not on the same page as the word "peltatum"). There are few typographical (14) or production errors (1) in the book, and its production features (hard cover, strong binding) should ensure a long shelf life. Other than the relatively minor points outlined above, the book is excellent, and fulfils its expressed purpose well.

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Wildflowers of the Canadian Rockies

By George W. Scotter and Hålle Flygare. 1986. Hurtig, Edmonton. xix + 170 pp., illus. Cloth \$29.95; paper \$19.95.

This book should not be confused with *Rocky Mountain Wildflowers* by A. E. Porsild, published in 1974 by the National Museums of Canada and Parks

Canada. That volume contained 257 reproductions of water colour paintings by Dagny Tande Lid.

The present volume contains a collection of over 260 excellent colour photographs of 228 species of flowering plants of the Rocky Mountain parks that are found in eastern British Columbia and western



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