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BOOK REVIEW

Plant Form. An Illustrated Guide to Flowering Plant Morphology. By Adrian D. Bell. Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. ISBN 0-19-854279-8 (cloth), 0-19-854219-4 (paper). 1991. 341 pp. \$95 (cloth), \$49.95 (paper).

In this era of molecular biology, teaching the value of basic concepts in plant morphology seems a formidable task. Adrian Bell's illustrated guide to flowering plant morphology represents an appealing approach to this challenge.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one deals with the "static" aspects of the plant: the descriptive terminology of vegetative and reproductive structures is explained and illustrated with examples. The second part presents the dynamic aspects of plant morphology: how a plant grows and develops in response to the environment in which it lives.

This guide is intended to be used either as an illustrated dictionary with extensive cross-references or as an introductory textbook of plant morphology. Quoting the author, "this book is deliberately, I hope, attractive."

If you can ignore the unattractive price—the book is not really affordable for college or graduate students—you will be certainly attracted by this beautifully illustrated guide, with its fine photographs and skillful line drawings. Descriptive botanical terminology, sometimes overwhelming to the beginner, is explained in a clear and concise style. (Perhaps a similar conciseness in layout would have reduced the price of the book).

The author made a remarkable effort to illustrate the concepts discussed with plants from different regions of the world, especially from the tropics, where the diversity of plant forms is unparalleled. Personally, I was delighted to see a species of *Qualea* (Vochysiaceae) illustrated on p. 312, but I was not able to find this figure cited in the text. This problem of not associating figures and text is repeated in several other instances. Also, a citation often appears many pages earlier or later than the associated figure. The figures are not numbered sequentially, but rather according to the page on which they occur. Moreover, several figures do not have an appropriate heading, and the legend of the figure on p. 206 is missing. The cross-reference system, potentially useful, gets very confusing and does not prove to be efficient, especially when the book is consulted as a dictionary.

If it is the thought that counts, Adrian Bell's intention to avoid tedious descriptions of the large number of frequently intimidating botanical terms is noteworthy. Significantly, this book is a reminder that the study of basic plant characters should not be neglected, and it stresses the importance of seeing the plant as an active and dynamic organism. After all, as Mr. Bell writes, "It is the plant that is always right."—MARIA LUCIA KAWASAKI, New York Botanical Garden.