Mapping the plants of the Pacific. Projects to map the distribution of the flora of a given region are more frequent in their inception than in their completion. The welcome we give to the second volume of Pacific Plant Areas* is therefore tinged with apprehension, for Professor van Steenis says in his introduction "The prospects of a third volume are as yet not clear". It is an understatement to add, as he does, that "the series gains importance in proportion to the number of published maps": the fact is that the work so far achieved becomes insignificant if the project cannot be completed. The maps themselves are mostly not at a monographic level: the intrinsic value of each individually is small. It is the collective worth of the series that justifies the project.

There is another point that merits consideration, *Pacific Plant Areas* represents a worthwhile effort in the present phase of plant taxonomy in that region. It does not follow that it would be a useful way to use skilled botanists in 15 years time. The call for rapid completion, at least as to the genera that actually occur within the Pacific area defined, is therefore strong. Pacific botanists must all co-operate to see this undertaking through to a speedy conclusion.

The maps themselves are good, clear and well annotated. Sometimes the significance of the use of the encircling line is uncertain: for instance *Hebe* (map 55) is encircled from New Guinea and Australia to South America, but for *Pernettya* (map 93) the Australian, New Zealand and S. American areas are encircled separately.

It is reasonable to make up a volume of maps such as these when they become available, rather than attempting to publish in a systematic order. It is a pity, however, that any one volume should be completely haphazard. If the maps are not grouped according to the type of distribution, there is surely no reason why the seven dealing with Loganiaceae, for instance, should not run consecutively.

While the desire to cover transpacific links which do not actually occur in the Pacific area is understandable, the inclusion in the bibliography of maps of a quantity of purely Malesian material is less easy to justify (e.g. most Dipterocarpaceae pp. 20–21, Myristicaceae pp. 34–35). Nothing should be done to increase the bulk of a project of this size.

This map list (pp. 7–52) is contributed by Mrs. M. J. van Steenis-Krusemann and is supplementary to that in volume 1. It is arranged by families and as it includes all the maps in the current volume it forms a useful systematic index to it.

B. L. BURTT.

* Pacific Plant Areas, vol. 2 (Blumea Supplement vol. 5).
Edited by C. G. G. J. van Steenis & M. M. J. van Balgooy. Leiden, Rijksherbarium, Schelpenkade 6, 1966. 312 pp. (inc. 157 maps). Price: Dfl. 29, U.S. $8.

Printed in Scotland for HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
by Hay Nisbet & Co., Ltd., Glasgow Wt. 71276 K4