Notes R.B.G. Edinb. 38(2):282 (1980)

BOOK REVIEW

Umbells for Everyman. It is appropriate that the Umbelliferae, so much in evidence in the British countryside, yet a somewhat neglected family, should be the subject of the second handbook in this series published by the BSBI.* The first, *British Sedges*, appeared in 1968 and there has been little alteration to the clear and concise format adopted then. The handbook remains the same useful pocket-size (c. 12 × 18 cm) with soft but robust covers.

The book begins with a brief introduction to the family, followed by an outline of classification and relationships. A short list of species grouped under their most common habitats is useful to the student, and those with culinary aspirations will be pleased to find immediately following, a 'Cook's Guide to the Umbelliferae': an interesting addition although one that I felt merited a reminder to the lay reader of the toxicity of some members of this family. There should, however, be little danger of a fatal misidentification occurring as the author has clearly taken a great deal of care to help the reader from making mistakes.

A most useful explanatory note prefaces the keys. Two types are included: the first an indented dichotomous key and the second a multi-access one similar in construction to that first used in the *Flora of Turkey* (1972) for the same family. These not only offer the user a choice for identification, but, in the case of the latter, allows incomplete material to be run down very satisfactorily.

The species descriptions are very concise and the terminology used is covered in a short but sufficiently comprehensive glossary at the end. They often include interesting pieces of information about the plants which serve to reflect the author's long standing knowledge of this family. All 73 British species, excluding a few casual aliens, are illustrated by full-page line-drawings of habit and fruit structure; the quality of printing served to enhance further the fine drawings by Ann Davies.

The positioning of the description to face the illustration is particularly useful—a layout that gives the reader easy access to all relevant information. The book ends with a short bibliography and an index of Latin and common names.

This is a most valuable and attractive handbook which should encourage all British naturalists to take a real interest in the family. One can only hope that £5 for a 200 page paperback won't deter the potential buyer and that it reaches the readership it deserves.

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* *Umbellifers of the British Isles* by T. G. Tutin. 197 pp. incl. 73 full-page illustr. Botanical Soc. of the British Isles, London. 1980. Price £5.00.