Notes RBG Edinb. 42(2): 351–352 (1985)

Book Review

A memorial to Prof. Michael Zohary. Three years after the publication of the first fascicle (reviewed in *Notes RBG Edinb.* 38: 486, 1980), the second part of this synoptic checklist* makes its appearance. It covers in Englerian sequence (*Syllabus der Pflanzenfamilien* ed. 12, 1964) the Geraniales, through Sapindales and Malvales, to Myrtiflorae; about 1100 species, at an estimate, are dealt with. Included are such difficult genera as *Alcea, Commiphora, Fagonia, Tamarix* and *Tribulus*; *Euphorbia* with just under 200 species is by far the largest genus. Geographically it embraces most of SW Asia, excluding Caucasia and Afghanistan, but including all of the Arabian peninsula. The countries or areas (e.g. Arabia or Syria-Lebanon) are further divided into sub-areas—85 in all, which does seem rather excessive 'splitting'! Turkey is divided into 15 'natural districts', the Arabian peninsula into 22, Cyprus into 6.

The concept of the work, its aims (though these are nowhere spelled out), the delimitations of the phytogeographical regions, the chorotypes and the natural districts all derive from the ideas and firmly held beliefs of the late Prof. M. Zohary and his insatiable questing towards a better understanding of the flora and vegetation of SW Asia. It is an ambitious project, in some families or areas over-ambitious, and its compilation, now being carried on at Jerusalem by Prof. Clara Heyn and Dr David Heller, must involve an enormous amount of time-consuming effort in the library and herbarium and in checking and re-checking entries. Its authors also have the daunting prospect of preparing future fascicles containing such monster genera as *Astragalus, Centaurea* and *Cousinia.*

In the present part there are inevitably small errors or omissions that specialists in the flora of the area will pick up, but they do seem to be few bearing in mind the wide scope of the work. Entries, for example, dealing with the Arabian peninsula are bound to be rather provisional in many cases, both because of the absence of a modern comprehensive Flora and as a result of much recent collecting activity. Some instances can be given: *Fagonia khattabii* is an unpublished *nomen* yet is cited as a valid species; *Zygophyllum gaetulum* (from N Africa) is almost certainly not in Arabia and owes its inclusion to a misidentification; *Z. coccineum* is apparently not a widely distributed species in the peninsula though indicated here as being such; *Z. qatarense* in contrast is widespread at least in the east; *Erodium neuradifolium* is not listed yet seems quite common and widespread in the east; *Monsonia densiflora* is given as an independent species but is surely not different from *M. nivea.* Likewise it is easy to find fault with the given distributions for many of the Arabian species. Yet, considering the difficulties facing a small Israeli team, the Arabian coverage is surprisingly comprehensive and occasionally prophetic: under *Bergia suffruticosa* is 'Arabia:?', and within very recent time (spring 1984) this distinctive species has been discovered in the Asir mountains of Saudi Arabia. In such very complex genera as *Tamarix* and *Tribulus* the treatments are sensible, realistic and helpful.

Few if any taxonomic changes are made with regard to the status of taxa and any new distributional records are not generally indicated as such. However, as an exception to this four species of *Daphne*, not recorded in the *Flora of Turkey* vol. 7, are listed as new to Turkey. Two are probably incorrect: the entry for *D. gnidium* is most likely based on a misidentification of *D. gnidioides*; and *D. caucasicum* is a synonym of *D. oleoides* subsp. *kurdicum.* The other two new Turkish records for *Daphne, D. laureola* and *D. cneorum,* could indeed be so, and in this instance one hopes that there are herbarium specimens to back up the claims.

The overall impression one gains from this fascicle is of an extremely accurate and commonsense work. The presentation of the information, typography, format and indexing is excellent. The coverage of the now large and dispersed literature is admirable and there appear to be few cases where a reference has been missed; one such small item concerns the correct name for the species previously known as *Melia azadirachta*—this cultivated tree is called *Antelaea azadirachta* in the catalogue, but its valid name is *Azadirachta indica.*

*M. Zohary, C. C. Heyn, D. Heller. *Conspectus Florae Orientalis: an annotated catalogue of the flora of the Middle East.* Fascicle 2: Geraniales, Rutales, Sapindales, Celastrales, Rhamnales, Malvales, Thymelaeales, Violales, Cucurbitales, Myrtiflorae. Pages xiv+86, 2 maps. Quarto, paperback, $15. Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. PO Box 4040, Jerusalem, 1983.

Despite the fact that this is undoubtedly a major concise information source for SW Asian plants, their modern nomenclature and overall distribution, one is left with the niggling suspicion that it attempts too much and to at least the uninitiated it gives the impression that our knowledge of the plants of the area is at a more advanced stage than in reality it is.

I. C. HEDGE