A Gangetic Flora. Much of recent flora writing in India has been devoted to small regions or districts, doubtless with the object that such a study is more thorough and intensive than had a larger administrative unit (e.g. a state or province) been chosen and the time taken to achieve publication shorter. This is the flora* of Marshidabad in West Bengal, a district bounded along its eastern flank by the River Ganges and abutting, about its middle, on the western border of Bangladesh. It has been a centre of commerce certainly since the beginning of the 17th century and is now heavily populated and, due to the alluvial nature of the great river, much cultivated. These factors combined have resulted in the disappearance of any natural vegetation and what remains are the vigorous native and introduced species able to thrive on waste ground, cultivated plants and those that have escaped from gardens. These facts may be gleaned from the introduction where soil, climate, drainage and relationships of the vegetation are discussed.

The author seeks to describe 'the species known to be native' though in a situation such as this it must be difficult to know what to include and what to list without description under the heading of ornamental or cultivated plants at the end of each family; a problem that he admits. This plan has led to an unsatisfactory result as he regularly transgresses this division in a confused and confusing fashion. Thus *Annona reticulata, A. squamosa, Argemone mexicana, Bixa orellana, Leucaena leucocephala* and *Pithecallobium dulce* to name but a few, all acknowledged American natives, are described, whereas *Pterosperum lanceifolium, Pterygota alata, Perlebia* (i.e. *Bauhinia*) *purpurea, P. variegata* and *Luffa acutangula* which are species of Asiatic, if not Indian, origin are merely listed as cultivated plants.

There is a key to plant families and to the genera within them, but there are no family or generic descriptions. Species names are followed by an adequate synonymy and vernacular names are given. Their descriptions vary from 4–9 lines in length but sometimes e.g. *Michelia champaca,* the only representative of Magnoliaceae, it falls as low as 2 lines. Following the species descriptions come field notes, world distribution, a few representative specimen citations and economic uses. There are a few line drawings that are none too clear. More time should have been devoted to proof reading as typographical errors are common.

This flora possibly includes the names of all the species that grow in Marshidabad District but it clearly falls short of 'a thorough and critical survey' that the author sought to achieve.

A. J. C. GRIERSON

Fruits of long-term collaboration. *The Grasses of Bahia*† represents yet another of the many results of collaboration between Kew and Brazilian institutions: a programme which saw its origin in Dr Ray Harley's visit to Brazil in 1968 as a member of the Royal Society/Royal Geographical Society Expedition and has evolved ever since—involving many Kew staff and an ever-increasing number of Brazilian institutions (most notably CEPEC—the Cocoa research institute at Itabuna, Bahia—and the Universidade de São Paulo).

Stephen Renvoize participated in fieldwork in Bahia in 1974 and in addition to his specialist interest in grasses developed an expert knowledge of the mimosoid genus *Calliandra* in Brazil. The product of his work on grasses is a 300 page volume with indented dichotomous keys, concise descriptions of the 92 genera and c.330 species recorded, specimen citations (which demonstrate the great contribution made by *Harley et al.*) and sometimes brief diagnostic notes. The text is complemented by no less than 110 full-page line drawings of excellent standard, all by Sue Wickison.

The work represents a valuable contribution to the Flora of Bahia (and to that of the northeast of Brazil in general) and I can find little to critize in it. The whole work reflects a terse, no-nonsense approach and the author is to be congratulated on an account which will prove of great value not only in NE Brazil but also in the central region and perhaps further afield.

J. A. RATTER

*Guha Bakshi, D. N. *Flora of Marshidabad District, West Bengal, India.* 440 pp. with 4 maps and 9 half-page figs. 1984. Scientific Publishers, Jodhpur/India. $50.

†Renvoize, S. A. *The Grasses of Bahia.* 301 pp. with 1 map and 110 full-page figs. 1984. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. £7. ISBN 0 947643 00 1.