

BOOK REVIEW

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Palms of Karnataka. K. Gopalakrishna Bhat. Published by K. Gopalakrishna Bhat, 'Madhuca', Srinivasa Nagara, Chitpady, Udipi 576 101, Karnataka. Printed at Aakrithi Prints, Mangalore 575 001. 2011. 93 + vii pp + 100 colour photographs. Price: Rs. 500.00.

The Palm family, Arecaceae, has a unique place in the entire plant kingdom, as the longest leaves, the largest inflorescence and the biggest seeds of any plant are produced by palms. Palms are an integral part of the tropical, subtropical, and arid regions of the world. They render enormous botanical and economic services to human beings in the form of timber, rattan, fibre, fruits as edible and medicinal, palm oil and also as ornamental plants. There are only a few literature on palms (incl. rattans) available in India. Similarly, due to its unique habit and complex vegetative and floral features the number of experts on palm are also few in the country. This book is an addition to the literature on Indian palms.

There are about 2400 palm species belonging to 189 genera, distributed in tropics and warmer regions of the world (Mabberley, 2008). In India, about 112 species in 24 genera are found (Karthikeyan, 1999). This book contains a total of 79 species of palms belonging to 42 genera that grow in forests and gardens of Karnataka state. The arrangement of subfamilies, tribes and genera are based on the classification by Dransfield & al. (2008). Species within genera are arranged alphabetically. The book begins with foreword, followed by preface where the author recollects the difficulties that he had faced while identifying the palms, especially the cultivated ones. The book begins with a brief introduction, followed by materials and methods and a detailed account on the morphology of palms. The systematic treatment starts with an artificial indented dichotomous key to the genera. For every species, the currently accepted name with authority and well-known synonym(s), if any, followed by a brief description, nativity/distribution, uses, if any, and common names (only English, Kannada and Tulu) are provided. Besides, colour photographs depicting the habit as well as some significant features are given for each species. A glossary is provided after the taxonomic treatment to understand the botanical terms used in the book. This is followed by a short reference, separate indices for common names and scientific names with authority are appended at the end.

Few scientific and constructional mistakes are also found in the book. For instances, on page number 2, under distribution heading, it is stated that *Calamus* is the largest palm genus in Karnataka with 14 species, but in fact, 16 species have been given under enumeration. Care should have been taken in properly aligning the leads in the indented keys. For photographs, either figure or photo should have been used, instead of plate. in the legends. As the book is for the state of Karnataka, under the distribution of each species the specific location, at least the districts should have been provided. Inclusion of line diagrams or close-up photographs of parts showing the salient features of palms would have thrown light in understanding the features in a better way amidst the text on morphology of palms. Though 25 literature are listed under reference only three, viz., Dransfield & al., 2008, Lakshmana, 1993 and Mabberley, 2008, are cited in the text. The last two blank pages (93, 94) could have been utilized scientifically.

However, on the whole the book, 'Palms of Karnataka' is a good identification aid to the palms of the entire state for students, teachers, researchers and horticulturists as well as those who like palms.

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