

Book Review

A Colour Atlas of Plant Structure

Bryan G. Bowes.

Manson Publishing, London, March 1996. 192 pp.
Hardback £48.00, ISBN 1-874545-20-0;
paperback £24.95, ISBN 1-874545-16-2.

The intention of this atlas is to provide a concise summary of present knowledge of the structure of vascular plants, mainly flowering plants, acknowledging the fact that students have less time than ever to dedicate to this fundamental topic of biology. The first two chapters of the book present an overview of the structure of plant cells and tissues and their distribution in the organisms. The other six chapters deal with classical parts of the plant: apical meristems, the green leaf, stem, root, and the sexual reproductive apparatus.

The text reads as a compact running story, which not only describes the morphology and other main characteristics of plant structures, but also explains their function and relationship with other structures. Statements are emphasized with clarifying visual examples, consisting of over 380 mostly colour illustrations, such as photographs of the plant habitus, superb light and electron micrographs and schematic line drawings which are, however, of a rather simple standard. Priority has been given to widely diffuse species or species of economic importance. The

quality of the artwork and text print and of the layout is high, especially considering the price of the volume (£24.95 for a paperback issue). The legends are complete; in addition to the explanatory headers and annotations, they report on the species, the orientation of the microscopical sections and their location in the plant, applied fixation and visualization techniques and magnification. The language of text and legends is precise but certainly not boring, and easily accessible to students and instructors who are not native English speakers. A 12-page glossary, an index listing terms and species, boxes containing numbered figure labels and supplementary bibliography facilitate the search for specific information. Being an atlas, the only weak point of this work is that it does not provide instant insight in the overall architecture of the plant and the locations of tissues in space and time. The addition of a few three-dimensional diagrams and series of developmental stages at the beginning of each chapter would be sufficient to overcome this minor flaw.

It is not a book to keep on a dusty shelf, but to consult as a practical tool for teaching and preparation of exams, a source of rapid reference and a pleasure for the eye, exactly as the author intended.

E.S. PIERSON