

Book Review

Décor Plants - A Lovely Companion Forever. Uma Shankar, Arshuma Famous Books, Agra, India. xxviii + 276 pages. ISBN 978-93-343-7756-9. ₹4,949/-

There are scores of books that illustrate the beauty of nature and, more particularly, the trees, their importance in nature, and their uses for humankind. This book distinguishes itself from other illustrations in two main ways. Using challenging macrophotography techniques, the author has stunningly displayed distinctive botanical characteristics of popular home garden plants to ease plant identification for everyone. Secondly, the book explains taxonomic terminology in a glossary. Furthermore, the book explains the IUCN's classification of species on the abundance-to-rarity continuum and their current status in categories such as threatened, vulnerable, least concern, and so on. The book explains the botanical details of the plants in simplified form. The author has meticulously tracked changes in plant nomenclature over centuries to resolve the accepted identities of every taxon. Thus, it is a complete book for taxonomists, commoners, students, naturalists, and connoisseurs of plants.

The book presents quotations from the Upanishads and Ayurveda on the importance of plants and their conservation, which are deeply rooted in Indian culture. The book contains three chapters. Chapter 1 provides a background for beginners on the multidimensional aspects of plant beauty, such as plant forms, size, colour, and texture, and introduces a novice reader to the basics of plants, their importance, and taxonomy. Chapter 2 goes on to describe all 101 plants, with spectacular pictures captured by the author himself as he studies their developmental phases over the years. Exactly two pages are dedicated to each species, describing the plants' natural habitats, flower structure, propagation methods, etc. This chapter also mentions the rarity and commonness of the species apart from their IUCN categories. Chapter 3 analyses the common and distinguishing traits of all 101 plants and depicts their blooming season in a calendar form. Another strong point of the book is its navigation, which can be achieved by searching botanical names (by botanists), popular English names (by hobbyists), or flower thumbnails (by commoners), all catalogued separately in three individual tables following the content page. An index of names complements it at the end of the book.

This coffee-table book on nature illustrates 101 plants of decorative importance to gardeners, landscapers, and horticulturists. The author is a renowned botanist with expertise in plant ecology and taxonomy. The book has a foreword by Professor Kamaljit Singh Bawa, another globally distinguished naturalist and conservation biologist. Undoubtedly, this book will be an asset to professional taxonomists, students of taxonomy, institutions working on plant resources, colleges specifically in rural areas, ecologists, foresters, environmental scientists, landscape specialists, gardeners, and all plant lovers. Overall, the book is a good buy for people who want to grow plants at home and enjoy their proximity, and for showing them to others who visit, to impress on them the importance of the specific species they cultivated.

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