

BOOK REVIEW

Acacias of Southeast Australia. Terry Tame. Published by Kangaroo Press (Kenthurst, N.S.W.). 1992. 206 pages. ISBN 0 86417 475 6. Price \$AU45.00.

This excellent publication is a source-book of information for 230 species of *Acacia* which occur in southeastern Australia. Almost one quarter of the Australian *Acacia* flora is covered, including all species occurring in New South Wales and Victoria as well as many that extend to the adjoining states of Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia. The book provides keys, descriptions, illustrations, photographs and other useful information and as such it is a welcome contribution to the growing literature on this very large and important genus.

The individual species descriptions are informative, botanically accurate and demonstrate that the author has a sound appreciation of the critical characters. This level of taxonomic understanding is accentuated by the self-executed line drawings that accompany each description. Besides showing general habit, pod and seed features these illustrations commonly show enlargements of phyllode nervature and flowers; these two (cryptic) features are fundamentally important to discriminate taxa with confidence. Species distributions and habitat preferences within southeastern Australia are described; further information is given by a map which depicts the Australia-wide range of each species. Other information provided for each species includes its place of publication, the derivation of the species name, its common name, details regarding who collected the type specimen and from where, and the flowering period. The general notes included at the end of each species account are particularly informative. These contain discussions on affinities, distinctive features of the plant, remarks on cultivation and aspects of biology of the plant. Colour photographs are included in a section at the beginning of the book, with seven or eight individual images per page.

There are three short introductory chapters. Chapter 1 is devoted principally to a description of the individual parts of the *Acacia* plant and the terms used to describe these. This narrative, and its accompanying two figures, introduce the reader to most of the terminology that is used elsewhere in the book. Included in the chapter on cultivation (Chapter 2) is an useful categorization of the species according to their stature (e.g. shrub vs tree) and climatic zones in which they occur (e.g. cool-dry, warm-humid, cool-humid, etc.). Chapter 3 is a scholarly, synoptic account of the evolutionary history and classification of the genus.

Two keys are provided, one to individual species and the other, a pictorial key, to major groups of species; both keys seem to work reasonably well, however, they were not tested extensively. My major criticism of this book is the lay-out of the key to species: because the leads are not indented it is very difficult to find the second couplet. This can be particularly troublesome when keying species that are placed towards the end of the key. Another (slight) inconvenience is that the index to names refers the reader to species numbers rather than to page numbers.

The strength of this work lies in its thoroughness, pleasing presentation and comprehensive coverage. It is a truly professional treatment of a particularly complex group of species. At a recommended retail price of \$AU45.00 it represents good value and is a must for all lovers of this, Australia's largest genus of flowering plants.

BRUCE MASLIN