

On page 2, it is stated that the degree of endemism of vascular plants in Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands is 44.9 %. This percentage of endemism should actually be 43.2 considering there are 149 endemics in the 345 indigenous species. This is a very high percentage of endemism for these islands with a total area of about 51.2 sq. km. The explanation of the specific epithet for *Ricinus communis* has been omitted. The genus *Sansevieria* on p. 523, 525 and 676 should be spelt as *Sansevieria*.

Despite these minor errors and omissions, I have no reservation in recommending this book to anyone interested in the flora or even the geography, climate, physical features and history of human habitation of these two islands. Considering the amount of time and effort put into the preparation of this book and the excellent production, not forgetting the impeccable editing, the cost is very reasonable.

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## Rattans

Dransfield, J. & Manokaran, N. (eds.), 1993. Plant Resources of South-East Asia (PROSEA) No. 6. Pudoc Scientific Publishers, Wageningen. 1993. 137pp. ISBN 90-220-1057-0. Hardbound. Dfl. 120.00. Available from, PROSEA Foundation Publication Office, Wageningen Agricultural University, P.O. Box 341, 6700 AH Wageningen, The Netherlands. For developing countries a cheap paper edition (about US\$ 10.00) is available from, PROSEA Network Office, P.O. Box 234, Bogor 16122, Indonesia.

This is the sixth volume from PROSEA, an international programme on the documentation of information on plant resources of Southeast Asia. This volume by 17 contributors provides details on 23 species and one genus of rattan that are commercially important or have potential to be so. Another 105 less important species are briefly discussed. It is not an identification manual; keys are not provided.

Over virtually all of Southeast Asia the use of rattan in village life is ubiquitous and significant. Traditional cultures would not be the same without rattan. This product has also contributed to the building of cities in this part of the world as the required binding material for wooden

scaffoldings. Several loops of rattan strips at each junction and joint, hold together massive scaffoldings. A demonstration of its toughness and high coefficient of friction?

The first part of the book is a concise introduction to the subject. It covers a wide range of topics including, origin and geographical distribution, uses, history of the rattan trade, morphology, growth and development, ecology, exploitation of wild resources, cultivation and research priorities and development. It is made clear that serious rattan research in response to a rapidly diminishing natural resource dates back only 15 years. This perhaps is the cause for unclear statements in the text. For example in the bottom paragraph of page 34, "There may be little control over the collection of rattans from the wild in many countries." Is there any doubt that there is little control? In the bottom paragraph on page 35, after saying that large-diameter canes have to be cured with a hot oil mixture, the sentence continues, "....." this treatment is said to make the canes durable by removing gums, resins and water." Yet on page 52 it is quite clearly stated (by a contributor) that this curing is to protect the canes from attack by staining fungi and the powder-post beetle. In the bottom paragraph on page 36 it is stated that, "Even where licences are issued and royalties paid to forest departments, there is evidence to suggest that harvesting is carried out with little thought for sustainability." The author of this is overly optimistic to expect that because licences are issued and royalties collected, the licensee will do something about sustainability (one is reminded about the logging industry). In any case it is expressed that the basic data required for understanding possible rates of harvest of wild populations are still being compiled (top paragraph on page 37).

Less explicable are slips in the citations. On page 16 there is reference to Brown (1941-1943), in the literature listing this is Brown (1951-1957). The years for some of the citations in the text (pages 34, 37 & 38) are absent; neither are these references listed in the literature. However, overall, the introduction is useful and very interesting.

Part Two, the main part of the book, is an alphabetical treatment of major species. All available information (some species have little) seems to have been neatly summarized under the following headings; vernacular names, origin and geographical distribution, production and international trade, properties, description (or sometimes, botany), growth and development, other botanical information, ecology, propagation and planting, husbandry, diseases and pests, harvesting, yield, handling after harvest, genetic resources, breeding, prospects, and literature. Although the contents emphasize cultural practices and handling of the product, the botanical description of each species is detailed and accompanied by a

good quality quarter-page line drawing showing all important parts.

Part Three of the book treats the minor species alphabetically. Information for each species appears under these headings: vernacular names, distribution, uses, and observations (which normally include notes on the botany, distribution and ecology).

The literature is listed in three different places: after each species in Part Two, where, as if emphasizing that these are important species, the reference is spelled out in full; at the end of Part Three where the references are numbered and only the numbers are cited after each species entry; and at the end of the book under the heading, "Literature." In this final list not all items found in the first two parts appear.

This is a useful addition to the growing literature on this important resource. The availability of a cheaper, "developing country" edition is most welcome, especially as this edition, though with a soft cover, appears identical in the paper, binding and printing to the hardbound one. The editors and editorial staff have done a marvellous job creating a uniform product from the contributions of so many.

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