

BOOK REVIEW: Flora of Hong Kong. Volume 4. Hong Kong Herbarium & South China Botanical Garden (General editors: Hu Qi-ming, Wu De-lin; Associate editor: Xia Nian-he; Volume editors: Xia Nian-he, Cheung Kwok-wai, Pang Kuen-shum & Yip Kwok-leung) . 2011.

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Volume 4 completes the *Flora of Hong Kong* project, which succeeds two previous floras from long ago, Bentham's *Flora Hongkongensis* (1861) and Dunn & Tutcher's *Flora of Kwangtung and Hongkong* (1912). With around 2100 native species (out of some 3330 total species) in an area of just over 1000 km², Hong Kong's flora is justifiably rich; the territory encompasses elements of both tropical and subtropical regions. China has about 31,500 plant species (treated in the near-completing *Flora of China* project that will be published as 25 volumes of text and 25 volumes of illustrations, which the present *Flora* complements), nearly 12% of the world total, and many plants generally distributed in South China were first described from Hong Kong.

Volume 1 included 10 gymnosperm families sensu Kubitzki (1990) and 75 dicot families; Volume 2, another 56 families; Volume 3, the remaining 29 families; and Volume 4, 40 monocot families. A Master Index in a separate volume was published in 2012. The format is highly accessible, with brief family and genus summaries (contrast these with some frequently lengthy beginning descriptions in the *Flora of China* versions), simple indented (typically artificial) keys (the taxa numbered and presented following the order they are keyed out), species references citing the major relevant accounts, taxon descriptions of up to 200–300 words, and short notes on known localities in Hong Kong, distribution elsewhere, ecology and (where relevant) uses and taxonomy. The *Flora of Hong Kong* represents a generally up-to-date documentation of the plant diversity, with few omissions (e.g., *Vanilla*, Orchidaceae) that have resulted from somewhat contemporaneous research publications.

Volume 4 itself has 673 colour photos spread over 59 pages following the main account. The “big ones” in Volume 4 include Cyperaceae (27 genera, 143 spp., Deng Yun-fei, *Carex* by Ng Sai-chit); Poaceae (95 genera, 227 spp., Xia, Yu Hui, Li Jing, Zhao Nan-xian, Peng Hua); and Orchidaceae (53 genera, 114 spp., Hu Shiu-ying, Corsica Kong). Other contributors include Guo Li-xiu (Arecaceae), Patrick Lai (*Halophila*), Richard Saunders (Burmanniaceae, Philydraceae), Wang Fa-guo, Xing Fu-wu and Zheng Xi-long (Dioscoreaceae), Yip Kwok-leung (Hydrocharitaceae, Limnocharitaceae, Najadaceae), Yu Hui (Araceae), and Zhang Dian-xiang (Burmanniaceae), and a great assortment of the other families were covered by the editors Hu, Wu and Xia, individually.

This is the only modern regional South Chinese flora written in English. It is a major project of the Hong Kong Herbarium, established in 1878 and China's first public herbarium. There are triumphs in different senses. Professor Hu Shiu-ying, Honorary Editor of the *Flora of Hong Kong*, provided the preface, in which she celebrated the completion of this flora, one she began studying in 1968. Professor Hu, whose own

contributions appear in the “modern flora specially prepared for Hong Kong” that she had dreamt of for so long, passed away on 22 May 2012, just a year after Volume 4 appeared.

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K.M. Wong

Singapore Botanic Gardens