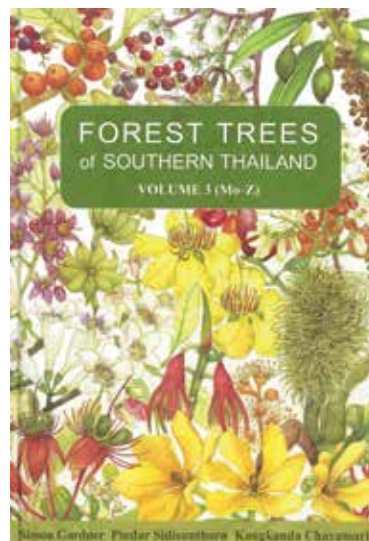


BOOK REVIEW: Forest Trees of Southern Thailand. Volume 3 Monimiaceae to Ximeniaceae & Gymnosperms. Simon Gardner, Pindar Sidsunthorn & Kongkanda Chayamarit. 2018.

Bangkok: Kongkanda Chayamarit. 182 × 267 × 42mm, hardback, 872 pp. ISBN 978-616-4685-71-0. 1950 Baht excl. packing & postage.



This amazing volume concludes a very well-conceived series, with the first two instalments devoted to ‘dicot’ families as follows:

Volume 1 Acanthaceae to Escallionaceae, 2015, pages 1–748 (price 2200 Baht);

Volume 2 Euphorbiaceae to Menispermaceae, 2016, pages 749–1530 (price 2300 Baht).

The series is a collaboration between the Forest Herbarium of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation in Bangkok, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, assisted by Tim Utteridge, with the support of many botanical specialists from both Thai and overseas institutions who assisted with specimen identifications and matters of classification. Their work both in herbaria and in the field, assembling a wealth of data and original observations, also received the interest of a number of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, botanical gardens and universities across Thailand.

Those who have looked through or used Volumes 1 and 2 would agree that a great deal of heart and soul, not to mention research and scholarship, has gone into the planning and execution of this most delightful series, which is at once attractive to botanists for the way that detailed descriptions, keys and notes are presented for some 1592 tree species, comparisons made with a further 610 similar species and brief annotations given for another 554 species. Southern Thailand is believed to have some 75% of the total tree species richness of Thailand, so this coverage is an important floristic work while more formal specialist revisions are still underway for the Flora of Thailand project. A few non-native trees that have naturalised in Thailand are included. Throughout, the families are presented in alphabetical order using the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group APG III classification but a useful guide (in Volume 1) bridges this with older family assignments used in earlier Thai botanical literature. An introduction to the geography, flora and vegetation of Southern Thailand sets the scene in Volume 1, presented simply enough to give a reasonable general background.

Each volume is systematically organised. Part 1 is the ‘Field Guide’, enumerating the families, genera and species treated; the keys are boxed and easy to locate, and superb photographs, line drawings or paintings labelled with a consistently used species numbering help show key structural attributes. Part 2 provides supporting information that some readers may find helpful, such as synonyms, references, distributional notes, and uses. The work is indexed for Thai and English/Malay common names and scientific names.

Pindar Sidisunthorn's incredibly beautiful paintings adorn the covers, each a collage of flower and fruit representations of the different families included in the volume. There can be few volumes that are, by their exterior alone, such a joy to hold. Pindar is responsible for some 1300 drawings used in this series. The characteristic, and stylish but accurate, depictions of illustrated taxa through the use of line drawings which are sometimes uncoloured in their vegetative parts (and so emphasise features such as leaf venation), but with key flowering or fruiting structures mostly coloured, make for excellent accompaniments to the descriptions. There are several full watercolour paintings. Photography is lavishly provided (there are over 7900 photographs throughout the volumes) and these aspects also render the work accessible to beginners and plant lovers in general.

Plant names sometimes change in response to new findings and interpretations that are discovered with new and more complete reviews of each group. The authors have endeavoured to include many of the latest such name changes, in addition to interesting new species of tree that were discovered through their fieldwork for this highly impressive compilation. These three volumes should make a work that will serve both Southern Thailand and the wet Southeast Asian tropics for a long time to come. In all, we have only the highest accolades for these wonderful books of botany.

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