



## Book review

**Plant Resources of South-East Asia 12 (2) Medicinal and Poisonous Plants 2**

J.L.C.H. van Valkenburg and N. Bunyapraphatsara (Eds.). Backhuys Publishers, Leiden, 2001, 782 pp., ISBN 90-5782-099-4, EUR 159.

This is the second installment of the proposed three-volume series of handbooks covering medicinal and poisonous plants from the South-East Asia countries. The first volume, as well as the second volume, is the result of a cooperative international program of the Prosea Foundation to document information on the plant resources of the South-East Asia region.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is a brief introduction, providing information on the choice of genera/species that were included in the volume followed by a short but ordered discussion of quality control pertaining to the usage of plant material as herbal drugs. The main body of the book is the compilation of the 171 selected plant genera/species. For each genera there is the listing of the scientific names for the major species considered, followed by known vernacular names, plant origin and distribution, uses, products, properties, adulterations, a morphological description of the plant, ecology, propagation, diseases, harvesting, and literature references. Each entry is an attempt to compile both local knowledge and published scientific research in an encyclopedic format and varies in length and detail depending on the information available. The last section of the book includes a listing of the literature, a glossary of terms, and indexes of compounds, pharmaceutical terms, scientific names and vernacular names. I am not sure what is planned for volume 3, but a combined index for all three volumes would be most valuable, allowing users to find comprehensive information on

a particular subject, compound, or pharmacological activity that might be common among several plants, but found in different volumes.

No color plates are included in the book. Black and white illustrations occur for approximately 30% of the entries. The illustrations are well done, but do not count on the handbook for plant identification for that is not its intended purpose. Only eight chemical structures were found among the 570 pages even though several hundred known compounds are referenced. The book will find its usefulness has a handbook, a ready reference to provide quick information for researchers, educators, health professionals, extension and commercial users. The value of this volume increases with access to both published volumes and will be most valuable within the completed trilogy [No. 12 (1–3)]. The last volume is expected to be out in 2002. Unless you are working with a limited number of plant species and can select the needed volume, I believe those working in the region need access to the complete three set volume to be most valuable.

The book I received for review was the hardbound edition with a price that may not be practical for the many of the intended users. However, a paperback version (EUR 68) will be available 2 years after publication from the publisher, after December 2003, and an even lower priced paperback version for those in developing countries was stated to be available directly from the Prosea Foundation (PROSEA Network Office, PO Box 3322, Bogor 16122, Indonesia).

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