
The author of this book is Michael A. Arnold, who is a professor of horticulture at Texas A & M University with prior teaching and studies at universities in Ohio, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Four additional authors and another cooperator contributed to sections in the book. The South-Central Region includes New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The book has four major sections, General Concepts, General Terminology and Definitions, Regional Conditions, and Selected Landscape Taxa. Each section has several subtitles.

General Concepts starts with the naming of plants. The discussion notes that use of scientific binomials is much better in identifying plants than common names and adds a level of polish and professionalism to writers and speakers. It is not noted that scientific names have authors. Many plants have had more than one scientific name as information about a plant is gained. Without the author of the binomial, scientific names are not much better than common names. The authors of binomials are given in the section on Selected Landscape Taxa. The hierarchy of plant classification is presented to group the plant kingdom into phyla, classes, orders, and so on down to genus and species. Considerable discussion is provided on these divisions and on naming of botanical varieties and cultivated varieties and hybrids.

In General Concepts, plant morphology as a basis for identification of plants is discussed with properties of flowers and fruits, foliage, twigs and bark, and whole plants being noted. Illustrations of line drawings of these different morphologies are presented.

In General Terminology and Definitions, a page is devoted to general developmental stages in life cycles of plants. Terminology for general growth habits of plants is discussed in plant identification in divisions of annuals, biennials, or perennials; woody or herbaceous plants; trees; shrubs; vines, and ground covers. A considerable discussion is devoted to plant hardiness and adaptability and includes topics of cold weather, heat, dry and wet conditions, soil salinity and pollution, and other unfavorable environmental factors.

In Regional Conditions, the contributing authors write about landscapes and flora in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. In this section, black-and-white pictures are entered into the text. Several climatic and ecological maps and images in color plates supplement the text. Regional Conditions has a section that is titled Plants as Landscape Design Elements for Built Environments and is referred to as a chapter. This chapter is noted as having assistance in preparation by a contributor who is not mentioned in the title page. The content is a random selection of topics that discuss the properties of individual plants, environmental conditions, and other issues as elements of design in landscapes. Color plates are presented to illustrate use of color in design of landscapes. The plates support the presentation of this chapter and are not mentioned in the text.

Family Descriptions is another section in Regional Conditions. The section discusses the presentation of families of plants as taxonomic units in a landscape. A page notes difference in the anatomy and morphology of dicotyledonous and monocotyledonous plants and is followed by an alphabetical listing of families by scientific names and a paragraph and a picture describing and illustrating characteristics of each family. The common name of each family is presented with each scientific name.

The section of Selected Plant Taxa is the major content of the book. This section or perhaps chapter has topics of Annuals and Herbaceous Perennials; Wetlands Herbaceous Perennials; Bulbs, Corms, and Tubers; Cacti and Succulents; Ornamental Grasses, Bamboo, and Palms; Vines and Ground Covers, and shrubs and trees divided by size of plants. Listings of plants include species that are commercially important, that represent plants important to the region or nation, and that include regional native plants or other plants that have potential for use or rejection of use in landscapes. Properties presented include scientific names with authors of binomials, common names, family, cold hardness, and other characteristics that are useful in selecting plants for landscapes.

Following the selection of taxa is a glossary of terms that readers may wish to consult to understand some properties of plants and landscapes. A list of Reference and Literature Cited is included in the book. It is not clear that any references were cited in the text although a list of citations appears at the end of chapters or sections. This list seems to have references that the author consulted and is a bibliography rather than a list of references cited in the text. An Index of Common and Scientific Names is provided. This review did not assess the value of this entry. The title page lists four copyrights for the book. The list does not state if this book is the fourth edition. According to the book jacket, the other publications may be under other names for the book. Somewhere in the front pages, a description should be provided as to what this edition adds to the previous publications. This edition is still a work in progress. The organization is hard to follow to determine where one section ends and another one follows. Some of the sections are short on text to indicate the content and to justify inclusion of the material. The type is small and hard to read. Such additional information may be difficult to include because of the mass of content and size needed to make the presentations. Further additions of material will make the book approach the size of an unabridged dictionary. The book seemed sturdy and endured handling during the review; however, it probably should be read on a stand or on a desk. The black-and-white pictures are too small and blurred to add much to the content. Use of a magnifying glass to examine the pictures enhances their value. The black-and-white pictures can be related to the text since they usually are associated with the paragraph of text in which the pictures appear. The purpose of the color plates is not clear since they are not associated directly with the text or cited in the text. The quality of the prints in the color plates is good. The title of the book is about plants for use in landscapes. The term built environments is used considerably in the text. It seems that this term is introduced as new jargon for landscapes.

The book contains extensive and detailed discussions of many plants for use in landscapes. It is a valuable resource for people who are studying, designing, or maintaining landscapes of plants. The content has applications beyond the South-Central Region. The price of the book seems reasonable considering its size and contents.

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