Book Reviews

Curatorial Practices for Botanical Gardens. 2007. T.C. Hohn. AltaMira Press (A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), Lanham, MD. 227 pages. $39.95. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-0-7591-1063-2.

Many signs indicate that as a discipline, the curation of living plant collections is maturing: undergraduate courses continue to crop up; graduate students turn out more theses; in 2007 the American Public Gardens Association offered a professional development symposium dedicated to the subject; and Public Horticulture recently was added as a section in *HortTechnology*. And now, Timothy Hohn leads us on an excellent academic foray into the science and systems of living collections management in his original textbook *Curatorial Practices for Botanical Gardens*.

Thus far, the only consolidated resource has been *The Darwin Technical Manual for Botanic Gardens*, published in 1998 by Botanic Gardens Conservation International. Although *The Darwin Manual* is a valuable handbook, particularly at the practical level, it lacks the broader, philosophical perspective of Hohn's new book, which combines the author's intimate knowledge of botanic garden work with a solid understanding of museum practice and theory. In fact, the author spends a great deal of time relating garden collections to the museum world—and vice versa—an action that may seem unusual or even anathema to some in the garden community. However, I applaud his approach. Rather than simply documenting how plant collections *are* curated, he outlines the way they *should* be curated, a presentation which is more apt to trigger a necessary paradigm shift.

Curatorial Practices for Botanical Gardens is organized into seven chapters, each abundantly footnoted with relevant citations. An even broader bibliography appears at the end. The first chapter affirms the seating of botanic gardens at the museum table by acknowledging their unique collections and need for proper curation. Chapter two, on collection governance, is useful and thought-provoking as it delves into aspects ranging from the preparation of a collections-management policy to dealing with ethical dilemmas that may surface along the way. The succeeding chapter on Building Collections outlines various approaches to plant acquisition, and the author does a fine job of reminding readers of the critical importance of following the policy and plan described in the previous chapter.

Information not only distinguishes a botanical collection (or any collection, for that matter) from a random assemblage of things, but also provides it with value. And thus to me, the most important chapter is the fourth: Documenting Collections. Hohn details the intrinsic significance of documentation by referencing the seven customary documentation stages for museum collections, which, to some, may seem over-the-top or unnecessary as an operational model for a garden. However, these concepts are well worth consideration, when practicable, for integration into our standard curatorial practices, whether one's collection is a display garden, a germplasm repository, or one of the many gradations in between. In fact, this chapter should be read multiple times by those involved in database design, records management, data collection, and other curatorial tasks.

Following this chapter is one on collection preservation, which comprises more than a few interesting nuggets. The author not only discusses preserving individual objects (i.e., sound horticultural practices), but also their genetic, historic, and programmatic integrities. The sixth chapter deals wholly with Collections Research, where Hohn firmly recognizes the primacy of *collections* research (as opposed to research that just takes place at the institution) for botanical gardens. In particular, I appreciate his egalitarian perspective that encourages all collections, regardless of size and scope, to take part in the discovery process. This section also contains some valuable insights of use to off-site researchers (e.g., university academics) who may be using botanical collections in their project work. The final chapter, though perhaps a bit too brief, pertains to the interplay between public programs and collections.

Throughout, the book provides specific approaches and tactics taken by gardens (as well as other institutions); however, I hungered for more and feel that it would have benefited from additional case studies. Perhaps, the author was reluctant to play favorites—or just the opposite, cautious to point out bad examples. In addition to the use of additional figures and illustrations, I would have liked also to see a summary chapter that tied the various threads together. However, the lack of these in no way diminishes the quality of the text. Among other aspects, one thing I found useful was the author's consistent use of recommendations, placed within textboxes and presented as basic, intermediate, and advanced targets—this presentation is of particular value for institutions assessing their current practices and establishing benchmarks for the future. And, again, Hohn's commitment to scholarship is exemplified by his thorough use of citations from a wide body of literature, some of which may be foreign to the reader and worthy of future exploration.

To the museum professional, this book links the theory and basics of curatorial science to the nuanced reality of managing living plants. To the student and educator, this text serves as a primary resource, providing insight into a topic under-represented in survey courses in public garden management. And to the practitioner, be they administrator, curator, or gardener, the book is a valuable tool to use when making strategic and tactical decisions related to collections management. It rests on my shelf within easy reach.

Michael S. Dosmann
Curator of Living Collections
The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University

Internet Guide to Herbal Remedies. David J. Owen. 2006. The Haworth Press, Inc., 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580. 119 p., incl. index and glossary. $9.95 softbound, ISBN 0-7890-2231-1, $24.95 hardbound, ISBN 0-7890-2230-1.

Internet Guide to Herbal Remedies by David J. Owen, PhD, is a small book full of useful information. The reader is impressed immediately by the clarity of writing and the simplicity of the instructions. Not a word is wasted. The book is easier to understand than either the "— for Dummies" series or the "Idiot's guide to —" series. The style is enjoyable to read, but the book is also a handy reference.

This text is scholarly with reliable online sites and citations. The differences between peer-reviewed materials and those written by the blogger are clear and well-defined, and the case for peer-reviewed articles is strong and justified. This point may be the most important one to be made with any internet research or book. Too often, students and the home-computer user are exposed to unreliable sources from authors on the internet. The case for well-documented, accepted, peer-reviewed articles is well made in this useful, little book.

The book focuses on herbal remedies, but it is possible to extrapolate the internet research principles and to use them for any topic. The book encourages searching online, browsing around, and getting to know the internet. By following the straightforward guidelines in this book and browsing around with keywords, the novice can gain skills that translate to any research that the computer user might seek. For people who are more experienced with the internet, the book is a good source of websites and useful information about herbal remedies.

The chapters are short and full of hands-on practical material. Chapter one explains the internet and the World Wide Web. The term URL is defined (Uniform Resource Locator) as well as http, which identifies the type of document, a hypertext transfer protocol document. If the web address starts with https, the additional s means the site is secure or encrypted. Each part of the address is explained in clear, easy terminology. The reader gains a real understanding of the internet, a process that is not easily obtained through the written word; however, this text does an admirable job teaching even the most unfamiliar of would-be computer users.

Chatting and online etiquette also are discussed, as are common and medical websites. The author discusses the merits of controlled, double-blind, clinical trials, the role of the Food and Drug Administration, considerations regarding untested herbs, and he critiques every website discussed. Owen gives lots of solid information on herbs along with their Latin plant names. He explains the need for correct nomenclature. He also points out any cautions and provides additional interesting information about particular herbs. He clears up acronyms, gives real screen views of what to expect on the computer, shows how to navigate a menu, discusses laws, the basics of botany, and specific conditions, and even includes a chapter on herbs for pets.

Although this book is an easy read and a user-friendly guide, it is serious in its content. It is a solid reference with a useful glossary and a comprehensive index. Dr. Owen has a way with words, taking a serious and sometimes intimidating subject (the computer) and making it accessible to everyone, a pleasant surprise in a computer-based text.

Margie L. Stratton
Bradenton, Florida

Manual of Grasses for North America. Mary E. Barkworth, Laurel K. Anderton, Kathleen M. Capels, Sandy Long, and Michael B. Piep (eds.). 2007. Utah State University Press, Ogden, UT 84322. 640 p., 900 illustrations and maps. $89.95, paperback. ISBN-10: 0874216869, ISBN-13: 978-0874216868.

Students and researchers throughout the United States revere the *Manual of Grasses of the United States* (Hitchcock, A.S. 1951. 2nd ed., revised. A. Chase. USDA Misc. Publ. 200. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC), although it may be long out of date. Mary Barkworth and colleagues at Utah State Intermoutain Herbarium have changed this situation with the recent publication of *Manual of Grasses for North America* from Utah State University Press.

The scope and purpose of the book are stated on the cover: "The *Manual of Grasses for North America* is designed as a successor to the classic volume by Hitchcock and Chase. It reflects current taxonomic thought and includes keys, illustrations, and distribution maps for the nearly 900 native and 400 introduced species that have been found in North America north of Mexico. In addition, it presents keys and illustrations for several species that are known only in cultivation or are of major agricultural significance, either as progenitors of bread wheat and corn or as a major threat to North American agriculture because of their ability to hybridize with crop species."

Information contained in the *Manual of Grasses for North America* was first published as two volumes of *Flora of North America* (Flora of North America Editorial Committee, M.E. Barkworth et al. (eds.), 2007. *Flora of North America North of Mexico*, Parts 1 and 2, Vol. 24 and 25. Oxford University Press, New York). These two volumes cover Poaceae in North America north of Mexico. In addition to native species and established introductions, they include many cultivated grass species, some introductions that failed to become established, and a few weedy species not known from the region but identified by the USDA as potential threats to U.S. agriculture.

The *Manual of Grasses for North America* reduces the content of the two-volume *Flora of North America* to a single book that includes descriptions for the tribes and genera plus all the keys, illustrations, and maps in the original two-volume edition. Subfamilies and species description (except habitat information) have been eliminated in the condensed new *Manual of Grasses for North America*, and illustrations are reduced to one-quarter of their original size. This condensed volume, the authors state, "is hoped, will prove as useful to today's taxonomists as the Hitchcock's *Manual of Grasses of the United States* used to be."

A hefty tome at 4.4 pounds, the *Manual of Grasses for North America* is divided into three sections: 346 pages of taxonomic treatments including keys to tribes, genera, and species; 155 pages of illustrations with detailed floral and plant diagrams; and 51 pages of species distribution maps. With detailed indices, the book is easy to use, and locating a particular species within each of the three sections is accomplished quite quickly. Citations are abbreviated in the *Manual of Grasses for North America*, so for complete information one needs to look online http://utc.usu.edu/grassbib.htm and refer to the two-volume *Flora*.

Many new, cultivated, and escaped grasses are listed. For example, *Pennisetum setacuem* 'Rubrum', a popular ornamental grass, is now classified as *Pennisteum advena* with "origin uncertain." *Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Karl Forester' is listed as a European hybrid of *C. arundinaceae* and *C. epigejos*.

The USDA Plants Database (http://plants.usda.gov/) has become a standard reference for nomenclature and plant information with the advantage of being constantly updated and available online. Information in the *Manual of Grasses for North America* is integrated into the Plants Database, so when searching for *Elymus hystrix*, for example, in the Plants Database, you will find species description, illustrations, and distribution maps from the *Manual of Grasses for North America* (referred to in the Plants Database as the Grass Manual on the Web). This procedure is actually the best way to find the online information; since the *Manual of Grasses for North America* website itself (http://herbarium.usu.edu/webmanual/) has limited information, more links are available through the Plants Database.

Students, teachers, and research scientists will enjoy having an up-to-date reference that provides good keys and taxonomic differences for Poaceae throughout the United States. For anyone seeking further detail, consulting the two volumes of the *Flora* can easily be done at most university libraries. Barkworth and her colleagues have produced a welcome addition for grass identification and classification.

Mary Hockenberry Meyer
Professor
Department of Horticultural Science
University of Minnesota, St. Paul