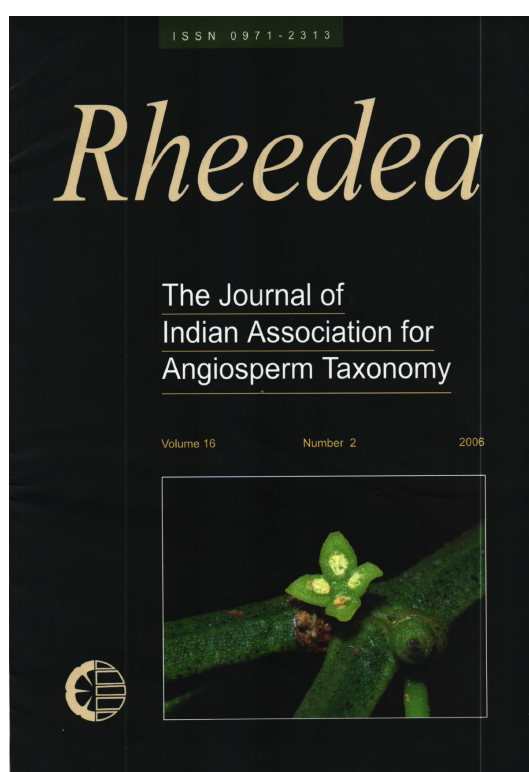




Book Review: Zingiberaceae and Costaceae of South India

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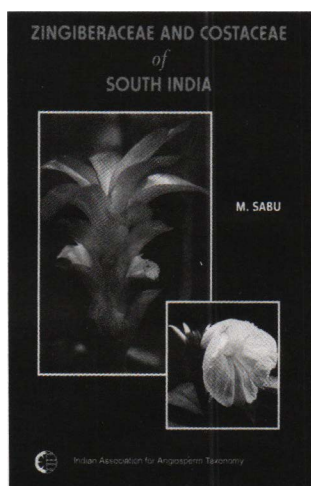


Book Reviews

M. Sabu 2006

Zingiberaceae and Costaceae of South India

Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy
Department of Botany, Calicut University
Tehhipalam 673 635, Kerala, India. 282 pp.
ISBN 81901637-0-1. Price US \$ 120



The Zingiberaceae are one of the most important families of monocotyledon herbs in the tropical forests of Asia. Several botanists are, at the present time, working on this family throughout SE Asia but until recently, when it came to Indian Gingers, we have mainly had the treatment of Baker in

Hooker's *Flora of British India*, now over 100 years old. With this new book we have got a comprehensive treatment of all members of the Zingiberaceae and Costaceae of Southern India.

Southern India covers the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territories of Mahe and Pondicherry. There is a map showing this area and an overview of the natural conditions in the region. This is followed by chapters on the morphology, anatomy, palynology and cytology of the Zingiberaceae and a chapter on the history of classification of the family.

The systematic treatment begins with a detailed description of the family and a key to subfamilies. All in all, 10 genera with 65 species have been revised. The largest genera are *Curcuma* with 20 species and *Zingiber* with 8. The genera are treated with full synonymy and comprehensive descriptions including cytology, pollination, uses etc. The description of the species follows the same patterns. Much new information is here presented and, when it comes to the nomenclature, many old misunderstandings have been corrected and problems solved. There are fine line-drawings of all

species as well as many fine colour illustrations. For each species all specimens examined have been listed and distribution maps worked out. The bibliography gives a useful survey of all relevant literature. It is the first time such an overview relating to Indian Zingiberaceae is published.

The book comes with hard cover and is printed on fine glossy paper. It is a publication that can be strongly recommended to all botanists working with the vegetation of S/SE Asia. We are now waiting for a continuation covering the important area of Zingiberaceous plants in India, the Himalayan region. The only serious criticism is the high price which will, undoubtedly, prevent many Asian botanists from buying the book.

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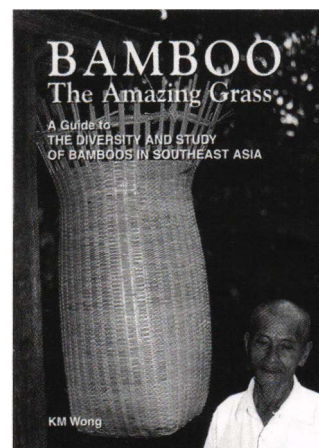
K. M. Wong 2004

Bamboo: The Amazing Grass -A Guide to the Diversity and Study of Bamboos in Southeast Asia, International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), Serdang, Malaysia and University of Malaya, Malaysia. 80 pp. multicolour.

No Price, No ISBN given.

This attractive book by Professor K. M. Wong, a well known expert on Malaysian Bamboos, is an excellent example of user-friendly treatment of this plant group. It provides information on basic morphology, taxonomy, ecology, conservation and uses of Bamboos to laymen and professionals alike.

With a catchy title 'Bamboo and Us' the author introduces the subject. This is followed by eight sections *viz.*: How bamboos are classified?, Cultivated or wild, common or rare, Structure of bamboo plant, The flowering of bamboos, Identifying bamboos, Southeast Asian bamboos, Conserving bamboos and Collecting



bamboo specimens. The text concludes with references and an appendix on selected facilities available with living collections of SE Asian bamboos. The text is supported by 66 figures, 62 quality colour photographs and four (Figs 21, 25, 28, 29) fine line drawings.

The book brings out the extraordinary diversity of bamboos with emphasis on important taxa, notes on growth, habit and structure and tips for the identification of main groups and species encountered in SE Asia. Discussion on the importance of *ex situ* collections provides helpful hints.

The author expresses his difficulty in providing a 'simplified' key as some species and groups are yet to be studied in detail. This explains the problem in bamboo identification.

With quality art paper and multicolour printing, the book is produced in an appealing way and the size makes it very handy for field use.

A section on the bambusetum at Rimba Ilmu Botanic Garden covering history, accessioning and a list of species conserved etc. would have added more value to this fine handbook.

K C KOSHY (Thiruvananthapuram)