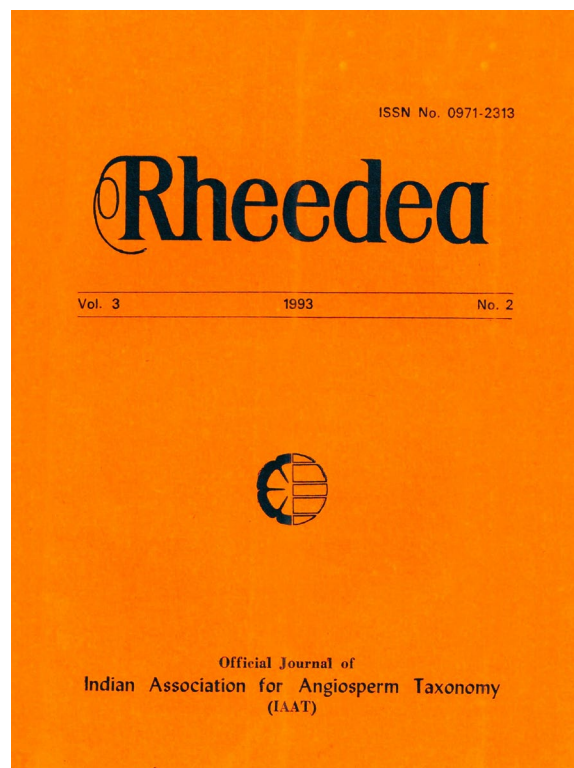




Book Review: House Plants

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BOOK REVIEW

Kapoor, S. L. & Sharga, A. N. 1993. *House Plants*, Vatika Prakashan (166 Niralanagar, Lucknow- 226 020), pp. 104 with 207 black & white photographs. Price Rs. 225 (US \$ 20), Library Edition Rs. 350 (US \$ 30).

Taxonomists have been generally accused of being an egocentric community, involving themselves in intellectual disquisitions and compiling Floras, Revisions and Monographs, useful only for other taxonomists, and in a language unintelligible to the layman ignoring the public demand for taxonomic information, especially on domesticated plants. In this context, it is a welcome change that taxonomy is going public, with Dr. Kapoor and Dr. Sharga publishing this book on house plants.

Unlike in the developed countries of Europe and America, we in India do not have many popular scientific treatises on cultivated plants and so, I am sure that this venture would be widely and warmly welcomed by various sections of the public as well as taxonomists.

Excellently brought out, this book deals with common indoor plants grown in India, methods of their propagation, cultivation and disease control. The 'calendar of operations' (though it has a subtropical, north Indian bias) would be highly useful for gardeners and plant enthusiasts.

Admittedly, this book does not cover the entire spectrum of house plants cultivated in India (see preface). Instead, the authors have chosen "340 choicest house plants". Apart from their scientific and common names and descriptions, the book gives useful tips to plant lovers on their cultivation. The 207 black and white photographs enhances the text and its usefulness to nonbotanist users of the book.

On the negative side of it, one cannot help feeling that the authors have not been even-handed in the selection of plants for this treatise. While certain groups like Araceae have got rather good coverage, certain others like Begonias have not received their share. Cactii and succulents are almost completely excluded, possibly for a future compendium.

Because the beauty of most of the plants treated here lies in the colour display of foliage and such other parts, colour photographs would have been ideal. But, one can understand this, as it would have escalated the price of the book several fold and would have rendered it beyond the reach of most people. So, it is taken well.

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Despite these, the authors have done great service to the Indian public in bringing out such a popular book on a section of ornamentals and to botanists who generally find the identification of these exotics from available literature extremely difficult. One only hopes that the authors will persevere with their trust with garden plants and will ultimately provide us with a comprehensive compendium on them, including in it all types of ornamentals.

I am sure that the present work would be very useful for students and teachers of botany and horticulture, besides being a source of reference for gardeners, interior decorators, landscape architects, nursery men and all others who love plants.

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