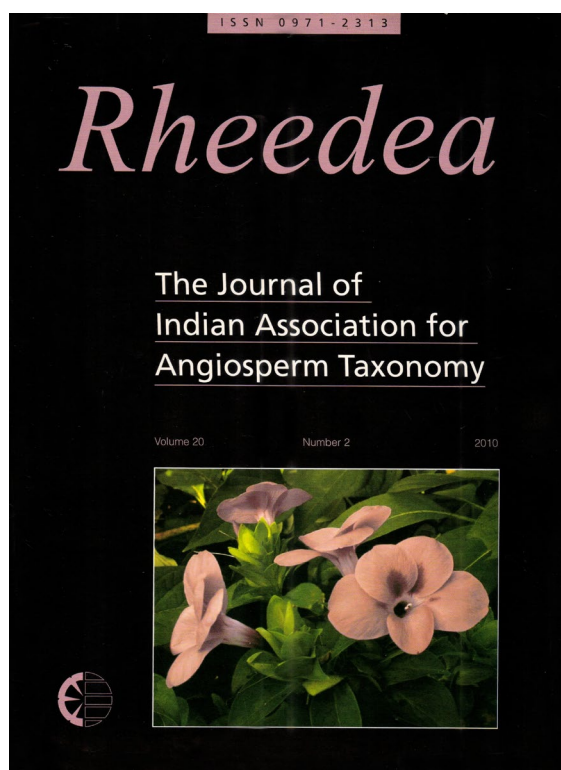




Book Review: Trees of Pune

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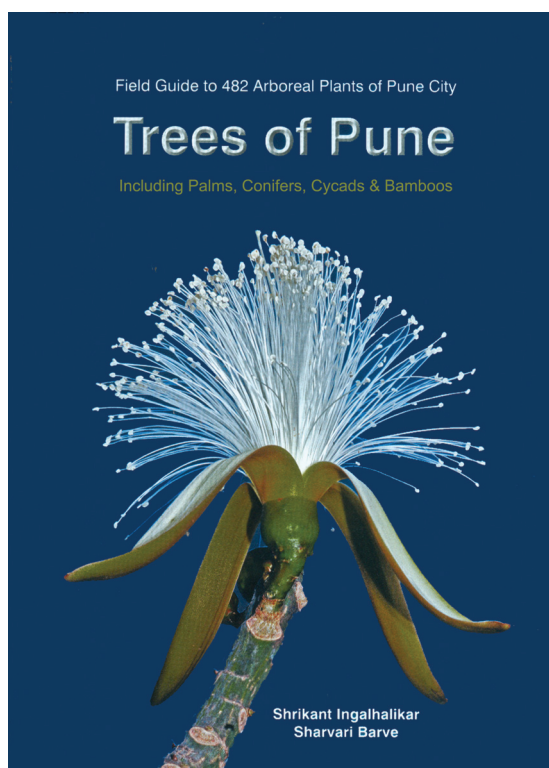
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BOOK REVIEW

Shrikant Ingalhalikar and Sharvari Barve 2010

Trees of Pune: Field Guide to 482 Arboreal Plants of Pune City, Including Palms, Conifers, Cycads & Bamboos September 2010. Indian Price Rs. 600/-. Corolla Publications, Pune. Printed at Pragati Offset Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad.



From a successful author who had the legacy of producing some finest books on botany that are appreciated by all, any new one will be patiently awaited. Shrikant Ingalhalikar's maiden book *Flowers of Sahyadri* (2003) was a hilarious experiment well setting out his concept, commitment and abundant talents. This was a very user-friendly and completely enjoyable attempt rarely seen in Indian botany. A worthy sequel, *Further Flowers of Sahyadri*, was brought out in 2007 which excited and inspired many more Indian botanists and photographers alike. Here comes the third one, *Trees of Pune* which is meant to be a *Field Guide to 482 Arboreal Plants including Palms, Conifers, Cycads and Bamboos of Pune City*. In this attempt he has been ably helped by Sharvari Barve who provided the text and did the editing. Avinash Rajurkar is to be complemented for his talent in graphics and layout and making the book a visual treat.

This book contains a total of 482 tree species belonging to 77 families of which 45% is native and the rest exotic. This also includes 64 species of palms, 6 species of bamboos, 16 species of conifers and 6 species of cycads. The arrangement is simple and easy to follow. The book begins with acknowledgements where Shrikant remembers a number of friends who helped him to achieve this and dedicates the book to all the tree lovers. In the preface Shrikant reminisces his childhood days with two trees, Prajakt and Pimpal (*Ficus religiosa*) which gave him 'hoards of experiences of nature'. He also notes the changes that have happened to the city of Pune in the last fifty years. He also narrates with grief the loss of a single opulent tree which gave golden flowers in season. He then describes the topography, habitats, climate, ancient Pune, avenues, gardens, flora and fauna, previous studies, statistics of species, heritage and rare trees, trouble-making trees and plantation tips. Identification tips are then provided with easy to follow sketches and terminologies. For canopy shapes also sketches are provided which will certainly help the readers to understand the shape of the trees. Each page has two species represented, each having one or two very sharp colour pictures depicting either general features or flowers or fruits. It starts with *Diospyros buxifolia* and ends with *Bambusa vulgaris* covering 216 pages. I first thought of listing the stunning pictures of great quality, but soon gave up as I found many in every page. True, some pictures are so good for the price you pay for the book and much more. Each species is begun with its Latin name, family name and local name followed by a picture with graphic sketch of the shape and a short description, nativity, occurrence, etc.

The section on palms (pp. 184 – 212) also provides an introduction, basic terminology used to describe palms and an easy to use classification for identification purpose followed by an alphabetical arrangement of 64 species. The section on Conifers (pp. 213 – 221) has a general description, identification keys and 16 species with beautiful pictures. Cycads of Pune (pp. 222 – 223) are

represented by six species under the genus *Cycas*. Bamboos are included at the end (pp. 224 – 225) with six species but the opening picture of *Bambusa vulgaris* is blurred and I don't know how it went without the notice of the authors. The last section has a classified list with avenues, clusters, heritage trees, rare trees, fruit trees and list of trees in different locations, names of NGOs connected with trees, nurseries in Pune and a list of trees in wild. Separate lists of shade giving trees, wind resistant trees, colourful trees, bird attracting trees, fragrant trees and thorny trees are also provided. Tree watching trails are mentioned for prospective adventurers. A list of 18 trees that disappeared since 1960 from Pune is also given. A short bibliography is appended. Glossary is attached to help with botanical terms used in the book. Two separate indices for common names (I didn't find the common name Prajakt mentioned in the preface in the index) and scientific names (with authors) are also appended at the end with a beautiful map of Pune and the locations indicated.

As this is intended as a popular book author names of species are not given in the text (but given in the index), but I would have preferred the other way. True, some author names are too long to be accommodated in the little space available, but it is a good practice in science. Author names would not have spoiled the beauty of the book. I feel a few comments on the names and distribution would be in order. *Talaumna mutabilis* (p. 34) and *Michelia champaca* (p. 35) are *Magnolia*. Some species are designated as native to Pune, which is not very clear; they are not endemic but enjoy wide distribution outside

Pune. Typical varieties or subspecies do not carry author names – *Madhuca longifolia* var. *longifolia* (p. 43), *Dalbergia lanceolaria* var. *lanceolaria* (p. 125), *Stereospermum colais* var. *colais* (p. 135) and *Cassia javanica* var. *javanica* (p. 144) are examples where author names are wrongly put on the varieties. *Couropita guianensis* is distributed in the Guianas. *Artocarpus altilis* is the correct name for *A. incisus*. *Pyrus malus* is now in the genus *Malus* and its distribution is believed north temperate regions. *Cordia sebastena* is a native of American tropics, not Peru alone (p. 80). Melastomataceae is the correct name of the family not Melastomaceae as on p. 87. *Calotropis gigantea* is described as a small evergreen tree native to Pune; it can be at the most called a large shrub and native to Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and China. *Brownea coccinea* is native to Guyana, Venezuela, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago. *Chloroxylum swietenia* is native of South India and Sri Lanka and not just Karnataka alone.

This is undoubtedly an extremely useful and charming book which everybody will love to possess. I have great admiration for Shrikant's accuracy in lighting, composition of framing and perfection in photography and opening up yet another world of plant life to us. Botanists in India in general are bad photographers and they print them worse. Here is one good example every botanist should learn to follow, if their subject is to survive.

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