

Book Review

Primavera JH and RS Sadaba. 2012. BEACH FOREST SPECIES AND MANGROVE ASSOCIATES IN THE PHILIPPINES. Tigbauan, Iloilo: SEAFDEC Aquaculture Department. 154 pages. ISBN 978-971-9931-01-0

Even before opening the book entitled “*Beach Forest Species and Mangrove associates in the Philippines*” by Jurgenne H. Primavera and Resurreccion B. Sabada, the cover itself is already an eye catcher. The serene image of the mangrove with the clear blue sky just invites the reader to open the book. It is very much admirable, that a zoologist and a mycologist were able to produce significant botanical publications such as this one and its predecessor—*a Handbook of Mangroves in the Philippines, Panay*. The book will serve as an inspiration and a challenge to our young, learning and aspiring botanists in the country, that high-quality plant taxonomic output can be done with basic raw materials such as patience, dedication and perseverance.

As a plant enthusiast, I find the book a worthwhile read and an enjoyable, at the same time informative experienced. One of the primary goals of the book is to introduce the mangrove and beach forest species in their natural habitat. By delving into this, the authors are exposing a largely untapped natural databank. The introduction of the book is well written in such that it describes the subject matter in a scientific way at the same time in a casual and non-dragging way. In layman’s terms, it can be easily understood by those who aren’t too familiar with scientific jargon. Several pages are devoted to the background of the beach and mangrove flora, their cultural importance and their local utilization. The authors even connect the identities of cities to the flora found around them. The introduction concludes with a moving poem entitled, “*Like the Molave*” by Rafael Zulueta De La Costa. The pages describing the plants soon follow after the poem. They are wonderfully captured in superb detail and provide information one can appreciate. Such information includes their habitat, morphology of leaves, flowers, fruits and utilization. A lot of information can be taken from just a few pages from this book. I find this a captivating book about one of the most overlooked beauties of the natural world.

Generally speaking, the use of excellent field photographs, user-friendly layout and inclusion of basic, diagnostic morphological characters, and utilization of the species are the major strengths of the book. Several suggestions however, can perhaps aid in improving the presentation and style of the book in the next issue such as:

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- (1) The increase in brightness of several “dim” photographs (e.g., page 5 – figure D; page 7 – figure A) and the dimming of “overly bright” photos (e.g., page 136 – *Fragraea philippinensis* flowers). Check the other photographs for related cases.
- (2) The removal of certain photographs that will not help the user identify a specimen, such as that of page 43 - figure A. The details of the “subfigure” are not clearly visible, hence somewhat unhelpful. See the entire book for related cases.
- (3) The manner of abbreviation of some author names at the end of every botanical name should be double-checked with current literature (e.g., Linn. pertaining to Linnaeus could be written simply as L.; R. Brown pertaining to Robert Brown could be written simply as R. Br.). Check the accepted abbreviation of authors name.
- (4) The currently accepted author/s should not be the one in parenthesis (e.g., page 142, *Villaria odorata* Blanco (Merr.). Blanco should be encased in the parenthesis not Merr. Check the proper authorship of revised botanical names.
- (5) Spaces at the bottom of several pages (e.g., pages 13, 23, 24, 25, etc.) are some sort of “dead air” that decreases the overall beauty of the book. The authors could perhaps insert some photos, illustrations or trivia, whichever is more fit, that could serve as “fillers” for these.
- (6) The replacement, adjustment or exclusion of some low-resolution photographs (e.g., page 95 – bottom left photograph of Noni Juice). Check the others for related cases.

As a whole, I find this book to be an enriching read. The information is invaluable and the presentation captivates the reader and keeps their hunger for knowledge alive and kicking. The combination of science and culture is something which I found to be the best point of this book. The balance of both feeds the scientist and the naturalist side of the one holding the book. I definitely commend the authors for making an exemplary book.

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