

Wildflowers of Tennessee

JACK B CARMAN

WOTN, Highland Rim Press, PO Box 2853, Tullahoma, Tennessee 37388. 427 p, paper, 2001, ISBN 0-9708418-0-9 US\$ 27.95 + \$5.00 shipping and handling

This attractive book contains volumes of information on a large percentage of Tennessee's herbaceous flora. The stated purpose of *Wildflowers of Tennessee* is to "foster an increased appreciation and interest in our native flora." With more than 780 outstanding color plates and descriptions of more than 1100 species, the book most certainly accomplishes this purpose. Unfortunately, its large size (15 X 23 cm [6 X 9 in]) and 427 pages, long species list, and a requirement that the user have a working knowledge of plant families to find a typical plant, makes it a bit much for the beginning wildflower enthusiast. Clearly, *Wildflowers of Tennessee* was designed to meet needs of the advanced amateur to professional botanist.

The book begins with a short 5-page introduction, includes information on the book's purpose, scope, the Grand Divisions of Tennessee, nomenclature, and plant identification tips, followed by 8 pages of line drawings showing leaf shapes, leaf parts, flower types, arrangements, and so on. An additional 7 pages are a glossary of botanical terms and the main body of the book begins on page 26. The book is organized phylogenetically beginning with the Aristolochiaceae and terminating with the Orchidaceae. It ends with a short bibliography and plant index.

The author suggests that botanists would find it as "an indispensable addition to their library or field pack." I agree that this book might be a great addition to a library, but I would respectfully disagree about carrying this large and heavy reference in the field. I carry it in my car and use it as a backup reference to other more user-friendly field guides. As expected with any paper-covered book with 400+ pages, it is hard to keep the book in 1 piece. I have used my copy for about 3 mo and the binding has already separated and the paper cover is coming apart.

Probably because wildflower is never defined, this massive edition contains not only herbaceous, non-woody plants, but a hodge-podge of 40+ species of trees and shrubs, 15 woody vines, 13 grasses, sedges, or rushes, and more than 85 non-native or exotic plants. The book provides descriptions of 125+ rare plants found within the state. Often, a photograph accompanies the rare species within a genus but only a description is provided with the more common species. For the amateur botanist or layman this is problematic because they might be unlikely to actually encounter these plants in the wild. For example, the author uses a photo of the rare, spring-blooming *Phlox bifida* Beck ssp. *stellar-ia* (A. Gray), known only from cedar glades in 3 Tennessee counties, but only written descriptions for the 2 common, summer-blooming *Phlox*.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the author's use of frequency occurrence information, based upon the number of counties in which a plant occurs. Thus, if a plant occurs in five or fewer counties, it is listed as rare. This obviously creates problems for a federally threatened species like *Helianthus eggertii* Small, known from 9 counties in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama. Although very rare, it is listed as "infrequent" while *Trillium simile* Gleason can be easily found in appropriate habitats, but is listed as rare because it only occurs in 5 counties.

The book has an interesting history with the professional botanical community and Tennessee Native Plant Society, and this is undoubtedly why Carman's

Wildflowers of Tennessee is self-published. One of the biggest problems with this book is getting a copy. It is only available from the author at the address provided above. Despite several obvious weaknesses, I am definitely glad the book is in my library and my car to help me with wildflower identification in Kentucky.

—Thomas G Barnes

Dr Barnes is Extension Professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist in the Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky. His research focuses on restoring native warm-season grasslands and killing invasive, exotic plants. Author of 2 books, *Gardening for the Birds* and *Kentucky's Last Great Places*, he is completing his own book on wildflowers and ferns of Kentucky.

