The needs of a botanist do not always address the needs of a gardener; the reverse is also true. This situation is unfortunate since they share much of the same interests and language. Since botanists rarely study ornamental plants and hybrids, the gardener is disadvantaged. Even if botanists do study cultivated flora, that scientific knowledge is generally not easily accessible to the gardener.


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The European Garden Flora: A Manual for the Identification of Plants Cultivated in Europe, Both Out-of-Doors and Under Glass, Volume 6; Dicotyledons (Part IV), Loganiaceae to Compositae. Without question, the splitting of Chrysanthemum caused great consternation among people accustomed to this name, especially when C. indicum, the florist's mum, was assigned to the new genus Dendranthema. In response, botanists conserved its name, yet substituted Xanthopothalatum for C. segetum and its relatives. This is just one of many taxonomic updates that help readers understand the reasons behind name changes. By explaining such changes, this manual helps appease anyone disgruntled by botanists' habit of assigning new names.

Disputed spellings of certain genera can also be readily settled by consulting the entries in the European Garden Flora. For example, the text explains that the alternative spelling 'Buddleia' (Buddle Jacone) is no longer acceptable, and that the generic name is correctly spelled 'Buddleja.' (Nurseries continue to use 'Buddleja.') Another commonly misspelled name is Brachygome (Compositae), grown for the colors of its ray and disc flowers; often an 's' is inserted between "y" and "c."

This manual does have a few minor drawbacks. Users may find fault with the paucity of illustrations, with only 48 plates included, but these plates do show the identifying details of selected taxa, such as the corollas of Boraginaceae and the calyces of Origanum (Labiate) species. However, there are references to illustrations mentioned after each species. For example, the text states that pictures of Clerodendrum thomsoniae (Verbenaceae) can be located in Plate 5313 of Curtis's Botanical Magazine, page 665 of Li's Woody Plants of Japan, page 122 of Simmons's New Gardens Book of Indoor Plants, and page 280 of RHS A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants.

Several problems lie in the identification keys. The keys do not work well if the descriptions involve flowers and the living plant is not blooming. Also, the keys require a microscope or hand lens to examine fine morphological details. Identifying Viburnum leaves entails paying attention to the presence of minute hairs on leaf blades, veins, and stalks. (I could not discern any leaf hairs on a species that was purported to possess them, and ended up identifying it incorrectly.) One key asks the reader to differentiate the

Harabusa yang asiatica, a rosette-type plant that produces fifteen-inch long inflorescences of drooping campanula flowers, garners an entry within the very diverse Campanulaceae family. The genus Incar-villa (Bignoniaceae) has a fair sampling of Chinese species (I. eno-di, I. himalayensis, I. youngiantha, and I. zhongdianensis), all grown as rock garden plants. Likewise, Codonopsis (Campanulaceae) has over ten species treated. These surveys of Asiatic genera augment the coverage of Australian and New Zealand plants, which are extensively featured due to their popularity as ornamental plants in Europe. Valued as evergreen flowering plants, Hebe and Peranema (Scrophulariaceae) occupy nearly nine pages. It is also appropriate that the volume covering Apocynaceae, Asclepiadaceae, and Gesneriaceae abounds with tropical flora, some of which are grown in glasshouses. Pachypodium (Apocynaceae) from Africa and Madagascar, Hoya (Asclepiadaceae) from the Malay region, and gesneriads from Central and South America exemplify the diversity within these families.

Unlike conventional horticultural or botanical texts, the geographic origins of the plants are italicized, cutting down on the time spent skimming through the descriptions. Such origins are sometimes specific, for instance noting Natal and Transvaal within South Africa for Mitrostigma axillare, a distant relative of Gardenia (Rubiacae).

The European Garden Flora also keeps us abreast of taxonomic changes and aware that some of the names may become obsolete after its publication. Where space permits, synonyms are listed. One particular case is Chrysanthemum, now divided into numerous genera like Argyranthemum, Nipponanthemum, and Leucanthemum. Without question, the splitting of Chrysanthemum caused great consternation among people accustomed to this name, especially when C. indicum, the florist's mum, was assigned to the new genus Dendranthema. In response, botanists conserved its name, yet substituted Xanthopothalatum for C. segetum and its relatives. This is just one of many taxonomic updates that help readers understand the reasons behind name changes. By explaining such changes, this manual helps appease anyone disgruntled by botanists' habit of assigning new names.

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