

Review

A beautiful little book on beautiful little plants

Reviewed by

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Zhang, L., Zuo, Q., & P. L. Hong. 2015. *The Miniature Angels in the Plant Kingdom: An Introduction to Bryophytes (Chinese-English Edition)*. Guangdong Science & Technology Press, Guangzhou. 148 pages. ISBN 978-7-5359-6119-8. ¥60.00 RMB/\$25.00 USD

张力，左勤，洪宝莹。2015。植物国王的小矮人：苔藓植物 (中英文版)。广东科技出版社，广州。148 页。



The small size of bryophytes as compared to humans naturally pre-disposes people to overlook them. An introduction to bryophytes for a broad audience must therefore bring these small plants into focus and illustrate them in a way that appeals to people's scale of perception. In this respect, *The Miniature Angels of the Plant Kingdom: Introduction to the Bryophytes* succeeds. The book combines introductory text about bryophytes along with more than 200 photographs that illustrate a rich and colorful diversity of liverworts, mosses, and hornworts.

The Miniature Angels is the second edition of a book first published in 2009. It builds on the first version, with additional content and new pictures. The book is bilingual in English and Chinese, with the primary aim to introduce information about bryophytes. It was written for students, teachers and amateurs. The book is divided into three parts, including a general introduction to bryophytes ("Getting to Know Bryophytes," 87 pages), bryophyte identification ("How to Recognize Bryophytes," 20 pages), and bryodiversity in China ("Diversity and Conservation of Bryophytes in China," 21 pages). All photographs in the book are labeled with the species name and Chinese name, and summarized in an index at the back of the book that is organized taxonomically and includes geographic information on the photograph (mostly province locations in China). The photographs

represent a total of 3 families of hornworts, 22 families of liverworts, and 38 families of mosses.

Across cultures, little green plants are often referred to under a common linguistic term that applies to a phylogenetically disparate assemblage. For example, both the term "moss" in English and its equivalent in Chinese ("qing tai, 青苔") can apply to organisms as diverse as algae, lichens, small vascular plants, bryophytes and others. In acknowledgment of this reality, the book begins with a very helpful section on distinguishing bryophytes from other small green things. The section includes pictures and a table to help the budding bryologist recognize bryophytes from lichens, algae, ferns, fungi, etc. The text proceeds through differentiating bryophytes from other green plants to more of the detail of bryophyte diversity and biology, with an introduction to the different main lineages of bryophytes.

The book is generally able to balance the approach of an introductory text without being too complicated in a way that might deter a beginner. This is aided by the photographs as well as illustrations that highlight certain points or notes of particular interest. The book does not oversimplify, and the text includes many technical terms. While the technical details and terminology are applauded, the book could benefit from a glossary. Some terms are introduced and briefly