

proaches this unpalatable genus – but having solved them, he now successfully uses his undeniable didactic skill to help others do the same. He will tell you – not by long strings of words but by means of instructive sketches – how to decide whether a leaf blade is flexible or rigid; how to make a transverse section of that blade with minimal equipment, on your office desk; how, having done so, to interpret what you are actually seeing under the binocular in terms of the usual diagrammatic drawings of sclerenchyma tissue and vascular bundles found in the literature.

The core of the booklet: the detailed and careful descriptions of the 40 taxa treated as well as the excellent drawings of habit and analytical details illustrating them, is a major asset for anyone studying the flora of the central parts of France. The general introduction, however, is much more: it may function as the diving-board for anyone, in Europe or elsewhere, who has the courage to jump into the cold waters of fescue identification. W.G.

## Floras

7. Santiago CASTROVIEJO & al. (ed.) – Flora iberica. Plantas vasculares de la Península Ibérica e Islas Baleares. Vol. V, *Ebenaceae-Saxifragaceae*. Vol. VIII, *Haloragaceae-Euphorbiaceae*. – Real Jardín Botánico, C.S.I.C., Madrid, 1997 (ISBN 84-00-07641-9 & 84-00-07654-0). LV + 320, LV + 375 pages, map and drawings, cloth with dust-cover.

The enthusiastic reviews of earlier volumes of this *Flora* (OPTIMA Newslett. 20-24: (22-23). 1988; 25-29: (22-23). 1991; 30: (10). 1996) are applicable without restriction to the present ones. One will notice that between them they leave a gap in numbering, corresponding to two large and complex families that will take their time to be completed: the *Rosaceae* (vol. 6), hopefully to be published at the end of this year, and the *Leguminosae* (vol. 7), which might be ready by the end of 1998. Users of the *Flora* will doubtless appreciate the thoughtfulness of the editors, not to let them wait for longer than is

necessary for the subsequent family treatments when they were already finalised.

Both new volumes are thinner than average, which is partly due to the constraints imposed by the sequence of the families and their varying size. They are not particularly rich in treatments of notoriously critical genera, although the larger ones: *Saxifraga* with 58 Iberian species (vol. 5) of which one (*S. felineri* P. Vargas) is newly described, *Euphorbia* with 54 (vol. 8), *Sedum* with 31 (vol. 5), and to a somewhat lesser extent *Thymelaea* with 21 (vol. 8) and *Aioidrosace* with 14 (vol. 5), all have their problems and difficulties, showing centres of diversity, as a whole or in part, in the Iberian Peninsula. Each of these genera stands for one of the medium-sized families here treated, to which the *Onagraceae* (4 genera, 32 species) and *Lythraceae* (3 and 14, respectively), both of vol. 8, may be added. The remaining 22 families (6 in vol. 5, 16 in vol. 8) are either mono- or bigeneric in the territory of the *Flora*, and several are not at all native there.

The general presentation meets the highest standards, be it for the quality of the print and layout, binding, paper, or – most strikingly – the illustrations; meaning that it equals what we got accustomed to by the foregoing volumes. Perhaps the most striking asset of the *Flora*, at least for an experienced editor's eye, is however the rigour with which it sticks to its elaborate, well conceived and utterly user-friendly pattern and style. Once achieved, this will be the outstanding monument of collaborative *Flora* publishing of our time. W.G.

8. Daniel JEANMONOD & Hervé Maurice BURDET (ed.) – Compléments au Prodrome de la flore corse. *Valerianaceae*, par M.-A. THIÉBAUD. – Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques, Ville de Genève, 1996 (ISBN 2-8277-0812-4). 116 pages, black-and-white illustrations, laminated cover.

As stated in my last review relating to this *Flora* (in OPTIMA Newslett. 30: (11). 1996), "what now remains to be done are essentially the *Rubiaceae* and *Compositae*, plus a few minor families". The *Valerianaceae* are one of those few minor families. The fact that their revision runs over far more than one hundred pages, while puzzling in itself, makes one expect to find