

Flora Ibérica: plantas vasculares de la Península Ibérica e Islas Baleares, Vol. 2: Platanaceae—Plumbaginaceae (partim), edited by S. Castroviejo, M. Lainz, G. López González *et al.* Madrid: Real Jardín Botánico, C.S.I.C., 1990. iii 898 pp. ISBN 84-00-07034-8, vol. II. (4300 ptas from Servicio de Publicaciones del C.S.I.C., Vitruvio 8, 28006 Madrid, Spain.)

Spain has a wonderfully rich and varied flora, still very much unknown. Estimates of its size vary: Smythies (personal communication) believes there to be 5238 species in his checklist (Smythies, 1984–1986) of which 941 are endemic to the Iberian Peninsula and another 478 are North African species not found in Europe outside the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands. His total number is 272 fewer than Willkomm & Lange enumerated in their *Prodromus* and later supplement (Willkomm & Lange, 1861–1880; Willkomm, 1893), and far fewer than the estimate of Galiano (1975). I believe that whatever the actual number (and I favour a higher rather than a lower figure here, even though I am no ‘splitter’), the important fact is that almost one-fifth are endemics, many of them rare and threatened with extinction.

At present, information has to be gathered from Willkomm & Lange’s *Flora*, the first volume of which appeared 129 years ago in Germany, and a subsequent diverse and very scattered literature. The publication of the Spanish *Flora* by foreigners severely handicapped subsequent studies, for Spanish botanists lacked easy or any access to vital Spanish specimens in foreign herbaria. The extreme radical taxonomy by Sennen, Pau and others then complicated any further studies. Recently, the botanical tradition has concentrated on phytosociology and after a very shaky start only recently has a successful *Flora* project got underway by the Spaniards themselves.

Volume one was published in 1986 (after a single part 0 dealing with Isoetaceae!) and deals with pteridophytes, gymnosperms and the angiosperm families: Lauraceae, Aristolochiaceae, Ceratophyllaceae, Nymphaeaceae, Ranunculaceae, Berberidaceae and Papaveraceae. Volume two, over 320 pages larger, takes us on from Platanaceae through Caryophyllaceae to Plumbaginaceae (part). *Limonium*, on which Matthias Erben is actively engaged has to wait until volume three. Eight further volumes are planned, and now after worrying rumours, thankfully the word from Madrid is: “the project seems to be healthy again and we feel optimistic about the future”. This is good news indeed,

for this Flora is following closely in the classic mould of such Floras as the *Flora of Turkey* and is therefore of the *highest* standard.

The Flora covers Andorra, Portugal, Spain, Balearic Islands and Gibraltar (included in neighbouring Cadiz province). Plant distributions are indicated by a list of provinces coded in a similar manner to countries in *Flora Europaea*. Note is made of whether native or naturalized by the use of square brackets. Families are keyed first, then there are keys to genera, each with a key to species. Important references are quoted. All taxa are given detailed descriptions. Synonyms are cited, and all names have authorities and places of publication. Illustrations are cited. Chromosome numbers are given and where these are for non-Iberian material this is indicated by an asterisk. There are brief ecological notes and the altitude range and flowering months are cited. The *Flora Europaea* symbol, ●, is used to designate endemics. Vernacular names are given, though of necessity limited fundamentally to bibliographic sources. Other important and relevant information is given as observations. Hybrids are catalogued with synonymy at the end of appropriate generic accounts.

Special mention must be made of the exquisite line drawings by E. Sierra Ràfols of Barcelona. There are 206 numbered figures, almost all full page, though some (e.g. leaves of *Quercus*) run to several pages and numerous other smaller ones, e.g. many un-numbered half-page or less (e.g. leaves and fruits of *Rumex*). The quality of these drawings cannot be improved upon, and the subjects are very carefully and well-chosen.

The Flora follows the *Flora Europaea* tradition in the style of detailed appendices: Appendix 1. Key to the abbreviation of authors' names; 2. Key to periodical abbreviations mentioned in the text; 3. Key to abbreviations of titles of books cited; 4. Dictionary of the meanings of specific and infraspecific epithets, as well as the derivations of subgeneric and sectional names; 5. References to the "Notulae taxonomicae, chorologicae, nomenclaturales, bibliographicae and philologicae in opus *Flora iberica* intendentes" published in the *Anales del Jardín Botánico de Madrid*, and 6. New names and combinations published in the Flora (thankfully, restricted to only two!). Indices are given to illustrations, common names and scientific names.

It is practically impossible to fault this Flora. One could debate whether specimens should have been cited. So much information is given so well, how much use would they have been? They would have clearly added very substantially to the size of the work in terms of effort, pages and cost.

On the question of price, the publishers are to be congratulated. Who would believe the price?—1000 pages for the equivalent of £23. And the book has a dust jacket, a *substantial* cloth binding and prominent lettering on the spine. I would have preferred paper of a slightly better quality.

There are now a large number of good taxonomists working throughout Spain. It is hoped that they are all going to work hard on this project, with full co-operation between the institutions, universities and regions, something which has not happened perhaps as well as it should in the past. With good luck volume three will be published long before 1994—we need it as soon as possible!

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