

WILD FLOWERS ACROSS THE PRAIRIES, 3rd edition

F.R. Vance, J.R. Jowsey, J.S. McLean, and F.A. Switzer. 1999. Greystone Books, Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver. 383 pp., illus., index. Soft cover, \$24.95. ISBN 1-55054-703-8.

This practical reference work remains easy to use for plant identification. Readers of the second edition will wish to buy the new volume to obtain 56 new pages about grasses and sedges, contributed by the new, fourth author, Frank Switzer. This section is a significant, welcome addition. The 3rd edition contains 96 more colour photos, for a total of 750, illustrating 455 species (compared to 250 species in the first edition and 400 in the second). Again excellent line drawings offer details not always evident in photos.

Descriptions of individual plants provide adequate information concerning shape and texture, essential to identification. The habitat notes provide clues to likely areas in which a species would be found, and are particularly valuable when different varieties of a species are included on a single page. Helpful notes,

such as those on poisonous properties (pp. 186-187), rarity (p. 203), and a suggestion for use (p. 204), provide additional interest.

Grasses and grass-like plants are a significant and welcome portion of this new edition. Only a few of the habitat views are disappointing.

On the whole, the images successfully allow identification of the species, a considerable achievement in view of the difficulties inherent in plant photography. Wild flower adventurers, whether or not they have ventured into the prairie regions before, will be challenged and pleased by this extremely well-illustrated book.

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Photo by Fenton R. Vance