

BOOK REVIEW 2005 - #3

Kurz, Don. Illinois Wildflowers. 2004. 256 pages; colored photographs; descriptions; selected references; index to Latin and common plant names. Cloudland.net Publishing, Cave Mountain, Arkansas. Soft Cover. ISBN 1-882906-53-5. Price: US \$22.95. Available from: Tim Ernst, Cloudland.net, HC 33, Box 50-A, Pettigrew, AR 72752.

Yatskievych, Kay. Field Guide to Indiana Wildflowers. 2000. xxxii + 357 pages; glossary; flower finder; line drawings; colored photographs; descriptions, selected references; index to Latin and common names. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana. Soft Cover. ISBN 0-253-21420-3. Price: US \$17.95. Available from: Indiana University Press, 601 North Morton Street, Bloomington, IN 47404.

Nature enthusiasts in Illinois have a fine new guide to our state's wildflowers. Illinois Wildflowers by Don Kurz combines fine color photos, short descriptions, habitat/range, flowering times, and abbreviated remarks in a handy 256-page volume. Carefully framed and very informative, the plant portraits are of exceptionally high visual quality. The overall excellence of the photographs is important, since they are the means by which the reader can identify the species. Lacking keys to families, genera, or species, the species are identifiable by being arranged according to flower color and time of flowering.

The color groupings begin with white, continue with yellow, red/orange, pink, blue/purple, green, and end with brown. They are easily found thanks to color patches along the right-hand margin of the book. With this arrangement, and the large size of the color images (two per page), identification is quick and enjoyable. But just as a color-coded guide has its advantages in ease of use, there are a few disadvantages. Some flowers vary in color and these will have to be searched over a wider spectrum. Around the Chicago area the most common teasel (*Dipsacus laciniatus*) has white flowers, while the species illustrated in this book has pink flowers. But with such a distinctive inflorescence, and such a fine image, the reader should be able to identify this noxious invader without much difficulty. Another problem is that some flowers which I think of as pink, are here placed in the blue/purple category. These include wild bergamot, wild petunia and a few of the asters. But again, all one has to do is to extend one's searching and the proper match should be forthcoming. Common names are included, and formerly used scientific names are mentioned in the remarks. All can be found in the index.

This handsome little (6" X 9") volume covers 400 illustrated species, while the remarks discuss an additional 127 related species. An added feature is that the remarks often include uses by native Americans and early settlers. The author-photographer surveyed the entire state and has been employed in environmental and conservation activities for more than thirty years. Consequently, his remarks about habitat and other aspects of each species are based on many years of experience. Clearly, this is a very successful volume for the beginning botanist. You do not have to recognize plant families, crawl through complex dichotomous keys, or be familiar with the technical jargon of plant descriptions to use and enjoy this book. Also of great utility to Illinois naturalists is a similar wild-flower book for Indiana.

The Field Guide to Indiana Wildflowers by Kay Yatskievych covers an awesome 1,564 species, in a slightly smaller (5.5" X 8.5") volume, that provides the reader with 640 small color photos in 357 pages. This volume begins by grouping flowers by the number of their colorful petals, followed by small outlines of 142 flower-types, in order to help you find the species you are trying to identify. The species, however, are arranged by families in a sequence only knowledgeable botanists will recognize. In short, species descriptions are usually accompanied by color images or simple line drawings. The difference in this volume is that you really should be acquainted with most of the plant families in order to use this guide efficiently. Unlike Illinois Wildflowers, the Indiana guide will be difficult for beginners (Neither book deals with woody flowering plants, nor with those herbaceous flowering plants that have little inconspicuous florets: the grasses, sedges and rushes).

All told, Illinois naturalists now have two fine, authoritative and colorful guides for identifying wildflowers in our state. The Indiana volume covers a great majority of the species found in Illinois, but it is more technical and requires some prior botanical knowledge. In contrast, the newly published Illinois Wildflowers, with large and friendly photographs, is a handsome introduction for beginners. And unlike some other recent field guides, Kurz's photographs do not display exaggerated colors, though a few have been printed rather dark. The other advantage of both volumes is that they treat our adjacent midwestern states and do not include species that only grow elsewhere, making identification much easier. Everyone interested in our state flora will benefit from these fine volumes, and every public library in Illinois would do well to have both on their shelves. Furthermore, the two volumes will be especially valuable to those instructing beginners in their local floras and all those working with volunteers in developing plant inventories. In addition, both volumes include short listings of other useful references.

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