

BOOK REVIEW 2005 - #6

Mohlenbrock, Robert H. Grasses: *Panicum* to *Danthonia*. Second Edition. 2001. xxvi + 455 pages; introduction; dichotomous keys; descriptions; illustrations; distribution maps; appendix; literature cited; index of plant names. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois. Hard Cover. Price: US \$50.00. ISBN 0-8093-2360-5. Available from Southern Illinois University Press, P.O. Box 3697, Carbondale, IL 62902-3697.

Mohlenbrock, Robert H. Grasses: *Bromus* to *Paspalum*. Second Edition. 2002. xxii + 404 pages; introduction; dichotomous keys; descriptions; illustrations; distribution maps; appendix; literature cited; index of plant names. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois. Hard Cover. Price: US \$60.00. ISBN 0-8093-2359-1. Available from Southern Illinois University Press, P.O. Box 3697, Carbondale, IL 62902-3697

When the name Mohlenbrock is mentioned, the usual association for Illinois botanists is his Guide to the Flora of Illinois (Mohlenbrock, 1975, 1986) and his most recent opus, Vascular Flora of Illinois (Mohlenbrock, 2002). Being a relative newcomer to the state, I first heard of his name as the author of a long running, enjoyable and well written series of articles on natural areas in our National Forests. Another series, for which he is also well known, is the Illustrated Flora of Illinois. Its first tome debuted in the early 1970's and additional ones have appeared from time to time since then. In the last several years, several early volumes have been reprinted with additions and nomenclatural changes, hence the occasion for this review.

Since the grasses are a large family, they were divided into two volumes in the first editions and this same division is followed in the second editions. The first volume covers *Bromus* to *Paspalum* and the second covers *Panicum* through *Danthonia*. The arrangement and sequence of genera follow Gould & Shaw's classification (Gould & Shaw, 1983). Each volume has essentially the same format: each has an identical introduction and key to the genera known from Illinois at the time of the publication of the first edition; following are 250 pages or so of descriptions of genera, keys to species, descriptions of species with synonymy, range maps and illustrations; and each volume concludes with an appendix for species added to the state since the first edition. These additions follow the sequence of genera within its respective volume.

It is fortunate that we have the author's identification guide (Vascular Flora of Illinois) with its complete key to the grasses of Illinois. In the two volumes reviewed here, it is not possible to key out a specimen of grass, even using one of the second editions, unless it was included in one of the first editions. Keys to genera and species of the first editions, and reprinted in the second editions, were not updated; instead, keys to the additional 20 or so species are included in their respective appendices. How anyone will get use out of this escapes me. Maybe I am missing something. What I would suggest (and this is how I use the second editions myself, as well as in my taxonomy classes) is to key out grasses using the key in Mohlenbrock's Vascular Flora of Illinois, then look up the descriptions and illustrations in one of the two volumes of the second editions of his grass flora. Another difficulty appears – since there is no combined index for both volumes, the user

must look in the index of each volume to find out, for example, that *Digitaria* is on page 280 in volume number, err, the one that has *Bromus* to *Paspalum* (the one that was printed first in the first edition but second in the second edition). This seems like a long way around, even to get to the excellent illustrations, which will help clinch an identification.

In general, Mohlenbrock's revised grass flora volumes follow current taxonomic thought regarding the Poaceae. For example, *Dichanthelium* is distinguished from *Panicum* (*sensu stricto*), which follows current usage, as exemplified in the Volume 25 of the Flora of North America (FNA: Barkworth, Capels, Long & Piep, 2003). Mohlenbrock provides a number of new taxonomic combinations for some of the infraspecific taxa of *Dichanthelium* in Illinois.

I noted a divergence from FNA in the genus *Bothriochloa* (a relative of *Andropogon*). Mohlenbrock reports *B. sacharoides* (Sw.) Rydb. from several counties in the southern part of the state. However, Barkworth, Capels, Long & Piep (2003) inform us that the name *B. sacharoides* pertains to a Neotropical species with pilose leaves. Our Illinois plants are glabrous and should be treated as *B. laguroides* (DC.) Herter.

In summary, the second editions of Mohlenbrock's important manuals of Illinois grasses contain a wealth of useful information, but because of the separation into two volumes, with two appendices, and the lack of a consolidated index, the information will be difficult to utilize, even for those who are fairly familiar with taxonomy and grasses. For beginners it may be a daunting task. This is a profound irony in The Tall Grass Prairie State.

Literature Cited

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