

## REVIEW

IRENE RIDGE (ed.): **Plants**. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002. 345 pp., illus., CD-ROM. ISBN 0-19-925548-2. Price: GBP 26.99.

This is a well-illustrated text book for students of the Open University, comprising six chapters: 1. Plant evolution and structure; 2. Photosynthesis; 3. Water and transport in plants; 4. Plant mineral nutrition; 5. Plant growth and development; 6. Interactions between seed plants and microbes. I cannot really judge the quality of the latter five chapters, although the last chapter (6) and especially the treatment of the plant-fungus relation seem quite fine to me. I feel more capable of evaluating the first chapter (1) on evolution and structure. And, I must say that I am a bit critical on this one. It is always difficult to find an optimum between completeness on the one hand and a good focus on brief treatments of essential items on the other. However, in this case I see too many omissions. No treatment of evolution can be given without presenting a skeleton phylogeny with presumed apomorphies indicated. A phylogenetic tree as presented in fig. 1.3 does not give clues, not to mention possible criticism on e.g. the implied monophyly of the hepatics, hornworts and bryophytes. The book not only focuses on plants (embryophytes), it is restricted to it. Not dealing with its sistergroup and further outgroups, in my view, severely hampers a proper understanding of the phylogeny and evolution of plants. A last omission to be mentioned is that none of the gymnosperm groups have been treated, which again hampers proper understanding of seeds and seed plants and places the discussion on the success of flowering plants in a kind of vacuum. There are enough examples of recent text books on plants, botany or biology showing that with only a few pages more, a much better view on the evolution of plant diversity can be presented. This, in my view, will be of great benefit for especially those students who are mainly interested in the last five, more physiologically oriented chapters.

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