

What is your favourite plant and why?

Brunonia australis because it is unique, beautiful and can be found in many habitats across Australia. It ranges from light to vivid sky blue, a rare hue in the world of flowers. It belongs to a monotypic genus and until recently was the sole member of the monogeneric plant family *Brunoniaceae*. Stumbling across a dense patch of *Brunonia* in full bloom is always a delight.

Why do you think the ANPC network is important and what do you see as our priorities?

To me the ANPC network is a conduit between researchers and practitioners, giving us all insight, inspiration and knowledge we can use to improve our

focus and our work. It highlights some of the fantastic work done to conserve species, the importance of genetics in restoration, field work that unveils the mysteries of plants and their ecosystems, translocation and restoration projects and much more.

I believe an important priority for the ANPC is to support and encourage the use of direct seeding, and a level of seed production capable of supplying the large-scale ecological restoration needed to halt the loss of species in this country. Offsetting lost habitat needs to include the creation of new high-quality habitat capable of supporting our rare and threatened species. There is no other way of reversing the overall loss of our unique biota.

Book reviews

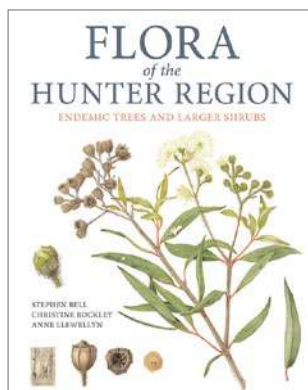
Flora of the Hunter Region: Endemic Trees and Larger Shrubs

Stephen Bell, Christine Rockley and Anne Llewellyn

Hardback. March 2019. \$79.99. ISBN: 9781486311026. 136 pages. 290 x 230 mm. Publisher: CSIRO Publishing

Working regularly with modern floras and field guides, one often notices limitations when it comes to rare and lesser known taxa. Specific descriptions, precise habitat and distribution information and indeed detailed imagery of the fine features required for their field identification are often lost in the quest to fit the overwhelming diversity of Australia's native flora into a user-friendly format. Coupled with the frequent modern preference for colourful photographs over diagnostic illustrations, it is easy to see why field identification of many of these rarities can present a challenge to amateurs and pros alike.

And so, it was with great enjoyment that I read Stephen Bell, Christine Rockley and Anne Llewellyn's *Flora of the Hunter Region*. A regional guide based on the botanically rich Hunter Valley in NSW, this book doesn't just seek to rectify the limitations outlined above, it raises the bar of what a modern guidebook with a specific focus can deliver. The beautifully presented pages combine comprehensive information about each species with detailed botanical art produced by graduates of the University of Newcastle's Bachelor of Natural History Illustration course, a fantastic concept.



Working through the book, each species is given a full two page spread. Each profile contains a wealth of information on the first page including notes on etymology, distribution, habitat, ecology, similar and related species and a summary of key diagnostic features as well as a complete taxonomic description. The accompanying distribution maps are also clearly displayed and easily interpreted. The second page is solely devoted to the botanical illustrations, providing a wonderfully presented display for easy reference to a specimen in the hand.

The illustrations really are what sets this book apart, however, with the detailed artworks highlighting the key diagnostic features of all species within. Reminiscent of the fine art found in older botanical references like Stan Kelly's Eucalypt guides from the 1960's, the images complement the descriptions wonderfully and clearly display crucial details often difficult to capture in a photograph. Their presence also means this book is not just for seasoned professionals – by displaying the diagnostic features so clearly, the often-complex terminology surrounding plant identifications is made clear for the beginner and the artworks make for a wonderful coffee table book for those with a more casual interest.

Another interesting feature is the authors' choice to focus on the 54 endemic trees and shrubs from the Hunter region only. By doing so, they have been able to give these often-overlooked species an in-depth treatment and in some cases shed light on species very poorly known or recently described for the first time. Easily cross referenced with other available, more comprehensive guides that cover the Hunter and adjoining regions, this guide really does complete the picture of the region's

unique diversity in a very thorough manner of which the authors should be proud.

I for one am already looking forward to the second volume covering the Hunter's smaller shrubs, cycads, orchids and forbs which is to follow soon. Be it for field identification, research or merely to appreciate the art, this book and the coming second volume are ones to add to the must-have list.

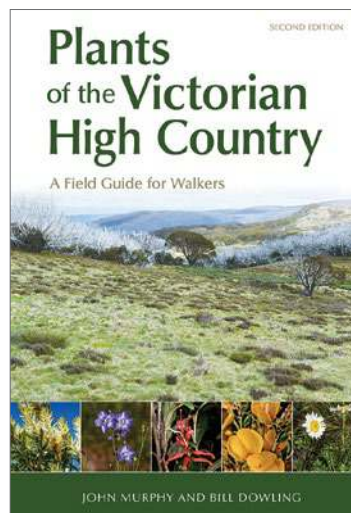
Gavin Phillips, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney

Plants of the Victorian High Country – A Field Guide for Walkers Second Edition

John Murphy, Bill Dowling

Paperback. October 2018. \$39.99. ISBN: 9781486309016. 168 pages. 215 x 148 mm. Publisher: CSIRO Publishing

This is a great field guide for those who are new to alpine flora. It's very functional in terms of looking up species and it has really great pictures. I feel like I have been waiting for a book like this for a long time! Compared to the Kosziouško Alpine Flora, the size of this book makes it much more user-friendly, as a field guide. All species are organised into five broad plant functional groups. At the start of each functional group, there is a simple straight forward botanical key. This is great, because it makes it easy to search in the book and identify plants if you don't know the common or the scientific name of a plant. Species information is succinct and informative,



the book briefly describes lifeform and the elevation zone where you may find the plant, as well as details of floristic characteristics.

I have enjoyed taking it on camping trips and getting my less botanically inclined friends hooked into alpine plants. I think it gives a nice focus in a group when you are just hanging back at a camp site and having a go at the ongoing plant quiz.

All in all, this is definitely a long-awaited product and well worth your money and the space on your shelf.

Khorloo Batpurev, Arthur Rylah Institute

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