REVIEWS


The long tradition of the Centre Technique Forestier Tropical in the field of wood anatomical research of commercial tropical timbers is reconfirmed by the publication of this book. The families and genera are treated in alphabetical order. Keys, based on wood anatomical characters, are presented at the end of the family descriptions. Finally, a very comprehensive series of illustrations is provided, showing the transverse, tangential, and radial appearance of the important species of a family. The book is completed with an index to scientific names.

This book is the successor of the work by Détienne, Jacquet and Mariaux on timbers of French Guiana, published in 1982. It is evident that the authors are familiar with wood anatomy and with neotropical species. They follow the nomenclature as published in various treatments of the Flora Neotropica. The descriptions are based on reliable (herbarium-backed) material, and the number of samples studied is satisfactory.

This publication can be strongly recommended. It presents a comprehensive survey of the timbers of the Amazon region and their wood anatomy. As such it is a must for all institutions in the field of wood technology and wood identification. Besides, libraries for systematic botany, either focussing on the neotropics or on other tropical parts of the world, have to be regarded as not being up-to-date if a copy of this book is not available in their collection.

It is a pity that the printer was not able to achieve a better quality of the excellently photographed sections of the various species.

The Centre Technique Forestier Tropical should be congratulated with scientists like Détienne and Jacquet, but also with their foresight to publish this book at a moment when most institutions restrict their research programs to the ‘old’ timber producing areas of the tropics, neglecting the fact that South America will doubtlessly become very important in the next decades.

Ben J. H. ter Welle


Of this lens key to commercial temperate and tropical woods on the Belgian market versions in French as well as in Dutch have been published separately. The 63 species included are those sold in sets by the Belgian National Bureau of Timber Information. All are pictured with x 10 end grain photographs. Some of the photographs are accompanied by useful commentary about infraspecific variability of certain features and about the distinction from other species. In the dichotomous key, comments and reference to pictured species are also helpful to guide the uninitiated user through some of the leads. Like with any key there will be difficulties in making a choice between various alternatives. However, on the whole, distinctively opposite states of easily observed characters have been chosen. Criticisms concern the use of storeyed rays in tangential as well as in the radial plane (lead 25) and the difference between medium hard and soft (lead 30). The publication must be welcomed as one of primarily regional significance (Belgium and countries which import roughly the same species in Europe). Major forest products libraries from other parts of the world may also find it a useful addition because of its information on many species from Europe and the tropics.

Pieter Baas