

BOOK REVIEW

PETER A. THOMAS. 2015 (reprint). **Trees: Their Natural History, Second Edition.** (ISBN-13: 978-0-521-13358-6, pbk). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge CB2 8BS, U.K. (**Orders:** www.cambridge.org). \$24.50, 240 pp., 35 color illustrations, 7" × 9¼".

Trees: Their Natural History is a very comprehensive book about everything trees, from their physiology and growth to their life cycle and relationship with humans. The first half of the book takes an in depth look at tree physiology. Leaves, trunks, branches, roots, flowers, fruits, and seeds are explored and explained using accompanying detailed diagrams, illustrations, and pictures, as well as statistics and studies. The second half of the book focuses on trees in a bigger picture, describing the growth, shape, life cycle, age, and health of trees, and finally ending with the impact trees and humans have on each other.

Each topic covered in this book does not merely list facts and figures. The author explains not only *how* a tree shapes itself or changes color of its leaves, but *why*, and illustrates each topic with a myriad of stories, examples, and studies complemented by charts, graphs, and pictures. Do keep in mind that this book was written in the United Kingdom, and so many case examples come from that region, though there were certainly plentiful examples from around the world as well. At times, the book did seem to fall into an ongoing pattern of presenting a "rule" of trees and then giving long lists and explanations of every exception to that rule, but this is difficult to avoid given the extreme diversity of trees.

Some of the language of this book may be a bit technical to the lay person with no scientific background, but in general it is quite readable, and most difficult or new vocabulary is explained, though a glossary would be helpful. The author claims the book as a source for "students and those with less formal interest in this fascinating group of plants," which I think is accurate, though perhaps a bit confining. While this book is no textbook, I think it could still be a very useful resource for professional scientists as well as students. Numerous scientific studies are cited in each chapter, and there is an extensive list of references and further reading at the end of each chapter. Those interested in tree propagation may also find this book useful.

It is difficult to write a book with the depth of information and outside sources that *Trees: Their Natural History* has, while still retaining readability and interest outside the technical world of science. Peter A. Thomas has done an admirable job with this task and has created a compact, well researched, and informative guide to trees that presents in a readable way information that would otherwise take numerous books and papers to learn.—Haley Rylander, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.*