

REVIEW

J.B. COMBER: *Orchids of Java*. Bentham-Moxon Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1990, 407 pp., over 700 colour photographs scattered through the text. Hardcover with dust jacket. Price £ 34. ISBN 0-947543-21-4.

The orchid flora of Java has received due attention at a comparatively early stage: in the first years of this century J.J. Smith already subjected them to a comprehensive revision. In later publications he added much new information and introduced more new species. Nowadays this body of information lies rather scattered over a number of periodicals which are only present in botanical libraries. It is gathered indeed in Backer & Bakhuizen van den Brink's *Flora of Java*, but this is entirely without illustrations. It is therefore not easily accessible, particularly not for the layman.

James Comber's impressive volume is a very welcome update. He provides a key to the genera, keys to the species of each genus, a description, and some additional information to each species. However, the most eye-catching feature of this volume is the presence of over 700 colour photographs scattered throughout the text, which show almost all the species mentioned. These photographs are of excellent quality and in most cases very informative. They are the result of numerous orchid-hunting trips, made during the author's 15 years in Indonesia.

I feel that a few things are missing in this book. In a number of genera (*Habenaria*, *Goodyera*, *Phreatia*, *Ceratostylis*, *Appendicula*) the colour photographs, however beautiful, are not sufficient to distinguish between the species. Simple line drawings of one or a few diagnostic parts of each species would have helped here as a check after using the key for the identification of a plant. Now, one still has to go back to the older literature in such cases.

This book contains a lot of information, presented delightfully. It will undoubtedly find its way to the specialist and the amateur alike.

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