
MIRIAM Z. EZUST

When a new fern book comes to my attention I am always eager to read it and learn more about my favorite plants. David L. Jones' Encyclopaedia of Ferns had more than justified my initial enthusiasm. In addition to being a prized reference work for amateur and professional fern-growers, this book will also be of considerable interest to anyone who grows indoor, greenhouse, or outdoor plants and is looking for something different, exotic, and interesting to grow. Jones' book is so broad in scope and yet so rich in detail that it can be appreciated instantly for the beauty of its illustrations and drawings and it also can be studied carefully as an instruction manual for the successful growing of these fascinating plants. The book is divided into seven parts, each in several chapter. The seventh part consist of appendices.

Jones presents his material with depth, logic, and common sense. His readers will quickly become familiar with the many forms, shapes, colors, sizes, and other decorative features of hundreds of species of ferns and fern allies.

The first two chapters, "Introduction to Ferns and Fern Allies" and "The Economic Importance of Ferns," while not the strongest chapters in the book, give a good overview of the subjects to be covered later. In Chapters 3 through 6 Jones presents his botanical basics: the structure, reproduction, life cycle, and classification of ferns and fern allies (Psilotum, Lycopodium, Selaginella, Isoetes, Equisetum, and others). The text of these chapters is very clear, and terminology is explained as it is used. There is also an excellent glossary. Unfortunately there are no figure numbers to accompany the author's line drawings so that a great deal of page-flipping is required to match illustrations with text. Moreover, captions do not indicate sizes of the illustrated subjects so, to a naive reader, a leaflet could appear as large as a sporangium. The thirty-two gorgeous color photographs by E. R. Rotherham illustrating some of the many variations of soral patterns on fertile leaves (pages 17 to 20) are consistently mislabeled "economic importance" and belong more properly on page 32 in the chapter on structure.

These three criticisms are the only complaints I have, and as minor flaws they are certainly overpowered by the strength of the rest of the work.

Jones discusses and carefully illustrates not one, but thirteen representative classes of ferns and allied plants in his chapters on structure, reproduction and life cycles. These chapters will be of inestimable help to the fern grower in deciding which spores will be likely to germinate readily and which would be especially difficult or impossible for the home grower to start. Part One ends with a brief but highly informative chapter on cultivars (of special interest to growers) and a chart
of terminology usually associated with these botanical oddities.

Part Two, the "Cultural Requirements of Ferns," and Part Three, "Pest, Diseases and other Ailments of Ferns," are essential to have on hand whenever disaster strikes. The descriptions of problems and their effects on ferns are vivid and detailed and will enable even a novice grower to make rapid diagnoses, employ effective remedies, and reduce the likelihood of future difficulties.

Part Four is the part that every amateur and professional fern grower will want to read most carefully. It deals with propagation and hybridization of ferns, and includes the simplest vegetative propagation techniques, complete directions with illustrations for the more sophisticated home techniques, and an excellent article on tissue culture. In Chapter 17, "Propagation from Spores," Jones lists fourteen steps to follow to ensure good results in spore germination. There are sound reasons given for each step. Even if you have never before attempted to raise ferns from spore, and even if you have accepted the myth that it is too difficult, I am sure that you, too, will have success following the excellent instructions in this chapter. It is also worth mentioning the Jones provides a list of fern societies and study groups from whom it is possible to obtain spores. Indeed, you might become too successful and wind up with dozens of diminutive gametophytes demanding to be nurtured.

Part Five gives many suggestions about the general needs for your window-sill-sitters or greenhouse inhabitants, and how to show them off to their best advantage, whether they spread, climb, or cascade. Moreover, eleven of the twelve appendices list material pertinent to this sections. Eight will be of particular interest to gardeners in New England: there are more than one hundred species listed which are cold-hardy, and quite a few, though not native to that area, can withstand frost and snow.

Jones has placed the most beautiful and fascinating portion of his book last. In Part Six, "Ferns to Grow," a worldwide selection of more than seven hundred species of ferns, fern allies, and cultivars are discussed. Brief but comprehensive information about each one is provided. Their grouping is not strictly by genus, but by the consideration of their cultural requirements, making it more convenient for growers to use. The use here of line drawings, black and white photographs and color plates give the reader a real sense of the habits and most distinguishing visual characteristics of most of the ferns under discussion.

All in all, this a delightful and practical book for any horticulturist to own and enjoy. It may also serve as a valuable bridge between the more popular (but less technical) fern books and the more sophisticated and specialized fern literature.

Miriam (Mimi) Ezust assists in the curation of ferns in the Harvard University Herbaria and avidly grows ferns in and around her home.

Marion D. Cahan

The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture.

—Thomas Jefferson


Miriam (Mimi) Ezust assists in the curation of ferns in the Harvard University Herbaria and avidly grows ferns in and around her home.
enthusiasm, and above all his obsession and fascination with gardening. Thomas Jefferson was by nature a gardener. The following excerpt provides the reader with a personal aspect of the writer:

I never before knew the full value of trees. My house is entirely embosomed in high plain trees, with good grass below and under them I breakfast, dine, write, read and receive my company. What would I not give that the trees planted nearest round the house at Monticello were full grown.

—Letter to Anne Cary Randolph [his grand daughter], November 6, 1807

Jefferson's "Garden Book," written over a period of almost sixty years (from 1766 to 1824), is a detailed account of every aspect of what he planted—the dates, the development, the transplanting, the observations of temperature and weather conditions, the failures and successes.

What with his keen observation of nature, Jefferson constantly experimented with new varieties of plants while exchanging ideas, seeds, and cuttings with gardeners in America and all over the world. He succeeded in making Monticello a truly botanical garden.

The "Farm Book" was written from 1774 until a few weeks before his death in 1826. In it Jefferson recorded not only detailed information on all farm operations—the tools, machinery, planting, animals, and buildings—but also extensive information about the slaves [he had more than two hundred]—their names, locations, life spans, and what material possessions, primarily clothing and bed supplies, that Jefferson afforded them. The reader becomes drawn into the daily life of Monticello. Jefferson's systematic attention to accuracy and detail is fascinating and sometimes amusing.

As an eminent agriculturist, Jefferson believed that agriculture was a science of prime importance and strongly recommended that agriculture be included in the curriculum of every college and university.

A significant inclusion in this book is an essay by the renowned historian Henry Steele Commager, entitled "Thomas Jefferson and the Character of America." Professor Commager presents an absorbing account of historical events in Jefferson's time, simultaneously weaving facts about Jefferson's activities, accomplishments, ideas, and ideals. As an ardent proponent of "Enlightenment" throughout his life, Jefferson's social, political, and moral concepts of Man are brought forth and interlaced into the entire essay.

Jefferson's attitude toward slavery provides information about his character. He expended much energy and thought to the eradication of slavery, even though he himself was a large slaveholder. His success was limited to ameliorating slavery, not ending it, but his influence was far reaching and significant.

Much of Jefferson's writing took the form of a crusade against ignorance. He worked endlessly to establish and improve the laws for educating the common people. While in his seventies he wrote, "Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppression of body and mind will vanish like spirits at the dawn of day."

Commager's essay provides a penetrating background to Jefferson not only as a political figure but as a unique human being. The Garden Book and Farm Book sections of this volume would be incomplete without this rich information that emphasizes and expands Jefferson's human side.

The excellent quality of the paper used is enhanced by the beautiful color photographs of Monticello and the truly arresting black and white portrait of Thomas Jefferson by Rembrandt Peale.

This book would not interest the casual reader but rather the historian, the horticulturist, the farmer, and—with the aid of the included horticultural bibliography—gardeners who would create their personal Monticellos.

Marion D. Cahan serves as volunteer editorial assistant for Arnoldia.