

team. Chapters in this section deal with topics such as nutritional problems associated with chemotherapy and radiation therapy, the day-to-day nutritional management of cancer patients, and special techniques such as enteral and parenteral feeding. One chapter is devoted to special problems in the nutritional management of children with cancer.

This book can be recommended to specialists as well as to a wider audience as a useful source of much of the evidence that exists on the subject of nutrition and cancer.

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## A Plant Family

**The Orchids.** Natural History and Classification. ROBERT L. DRESSLER. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1981. xii, 332 pp., illus., + plates. \$27.50.

The orchids, with their often dazzling and seemingly extravagant flowers, elicit greater human response and probably have attracted a larger group of devotees than any other group in the plant kingdom. With some 20,000 known species (and perhaps 5000 yet to be described) in approximately 725 genera, the Orchidaceae are conceded by most to be the largest family of flowering plants. Herbaceous in form, with flowering plants ranging in size from about 1 centimeter long (*Platystele*) to lianas of many meters (*Vanilla*, whence the true vanilla flavoring is derived), orchids are found in most regions of the habitable globe, either occupying terrestrial habitats, as is the case in temperate zones, or, as is most typical of tropical regions, being constituents of the rich epiphytic flora. It is in these tropical arboreal settings, especially in the Americas and southeast Asia, that orchids have attained their greatest density and diversity.

The same elevated habitats that have been so rewarding to orchid evolution have served in their relative inaccessibility to restrict our view of the orchids. Despite the extensive literature dealing with them, much of it written in a popular vein and often lavishly illustrated, the orchids remain enigmatic. Little is known of their population structure and dynamics, and even though much of their diversity in floral morphology may be related to their rich pollinator fauna—a fact that did not escape the attention of Darwin—many interpretations are based

on conjecture rather than observation. Despite excellent research carried on by some orchidologists, including the author of this book, much of the work tends to be compilatory or floristic, lacking the depth that may be attained monographically or the insights that may be gained from modern systematic approaches. The Orchidaceae remain fertile ground for innovative study.

For those who wish to enter the world of orchids, whether botanically or horticulturally, this beautifully illustrated and well-produced book will be an indispensable reference. Writing in a style that will appeal to amateur enthusiasts and professionals, the author justifiably digresses here and there to provide brief discussions of subjects such as classification, the organization of the plant kingdom, and speciation. Yet these sections do not seem to detract from the fact that this is a solid botanical contribution.

The book divides itself naturally into two parts. The first part consists of seven expository chapters that provide a definition of the orchids, consider their geographical dispersion in terms of the present and of geologic history, and describe their morphology, especially floral structures, in both phenetic and phyletic contexts. In the chapter on ecology, sections are devoted to mycorrhiza, epiphytism, ant relationships, phenology, and pollinators, among other subjects. Speciation and evolution of higher categories are the principal elements of the chapter on evolution; that dealing with classification provides a rationale for the taxonomic treatment of subfamilies, tribes, and subtribes that constitutes the second part of the treatise. For each of these taxa, as is appropriate, information is given on morphology, distribution, pollination, chromosome numbers, number of species, names of genera, and occurrence of intergeneric hybrids. The treatment of each concludes with a general discussion, thoughts on relationships and phyletic trends, and pertinent references.

The book is not without fault. For example, the discussion of the evolution of habit precedes the definition of pseudobulbs and other terms that give the background necessary to appreciate the evolutionary interpretations, and the introduction of the terms *r* and *K* selection without definition will leave some readers perplexed. But these are minor points. The book is informative and a delight to read.

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## Books Received

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**Coping with Crisis and Handicap.** Proceedings of a symposium, Boston, Sept. 1979. Aubrey Milunsky, Ed. Plenum, New York, 1981. xvi, 358 pp., illus. \$19.50.

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