

Book Review

Flora Mesoamericana, Volume 6

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ISBN 968-36-3310-2. Available from the Missouri Botanical Garden, Department Eleven, P.O. Box 299, St. Louis, Missouri 63166-0299, U.S.A. Price \$75 plus \$3 for shipment.

Flora Mesoamericana is a collaborative project organized by three of the herbaria most active in the floristics of the region that extends from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Mexico) to the Darien (Panama). Presently over 200 specialists are preparing treatments for the seven volumes of this important work. *Flora Mesoamericana* will cover all the vascular plants including ferns and fern allies, cycads, conifers, and angiosperms (approximately 18,000 species of native and important cultivated plants). The contents of the volumes will be: Vol. 1: Ferns and allies; Vol. 2: Cycadaceae to Connaraceae; Vol. 3: Fabaceae to Begoniaceae; Vol. 4: Cucurbitaceae to Polemoniaceae; Vol. 5: Fouquieriaceae to Asteraceae; Vol. 6: Alismataceae to Cyperaceae; Vol. 7: Arecaceae to Orchidaceae. The volumes will be published irregularly (as they are ready), but the planned order is: 6, 1, 4, 2, 3, 5, and 7. Volume 6 was published in 1994; Volume 1 will arrive sometime in 1995; and Volume 4 should be ready in 1996.

If Volume 6 is any indication, *Flora Mesoamericana* will become the standard floristic reference work for a generation or more of scientists working in the area. We haven't seen anything like this since the publication of the *Flora of Guatemala* (Fieldiana) or the *Flora of Panama* (Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden). I have three copies just in case something happens to the first two. Volume 6 includes 28 families of monocots with 326 genera and 1891 species; these include one family, two genera, and 104 species that were described for the first time in the past ten years. The five large families treated in Vol. 6 are Poaceae with 176 genera and 834 species, Cyperaceae with 32 genera and 335 species, Bromeliaceae with 18 genera and 301 species, Commelinaceae with 13 genera and 65 species, and Agavaceae with 11 genera and 45 species. There were 47 botanists that contributed treatments in this volume, and they examined specimens from many herbaria in Europe, the U.S.A., and the countries that make up Mesoamerica. Each accepted species is described and its typification, nomenclature, habitat, and distribution within and outside Mesoamerica is included.

The volume is hardbound, and all the text and keys are in Spanish. We are fortunate that the editors were so farsighted, because I don't think many of us will live to see the sequel. The first printing was only 2500 copies, and I would recommend buying a couple of copies while the supply lasts!

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