

Book review

A Guide to Herbaceous and Shrub Legumes of Queensland

J. B. Hacker. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane. 351pp. A\$80.

Available from the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia, c/o CSIRO, St Lucia, Qld 4067, Australia.

This beautiful "legume book" is the logical companion to the author's efforts in the earlier "grass book". But it goes further than that. It is a work in itself which will stand as such as a monument to the colossal and original effort put into it by the author and the deserving support of others, most notably Mr Les Pedley.

Being about Queensland, the book really encompasses the northeast quarter of Australia or most of the tropics and subtropics of this continent. Through the identification keys it is exhaustive in its coverage of indigenous, naturalised and cultivated representatives of this group of plants. A great many of them are of interest to grazier, farmer, naturalist, gardener, student and others alike. It is profusely illustrated with excellent colour pictures, most of which were taken by the author himself. This recognises the importance of colour in the recognition of the species. There are some well-executed line drawings to help the user make identifications where fine detail is required. This combination makes the book most useable and satisfying for anybody

who has an interest in plants for whatever reason, whether they are technical or not.

With a book like this it is hard to find much to say in criticism of it. One does not read it from cover to cover, one uses it and then the good and bad points show themselves. From my limited working of the book I have not found much that one could criticise. It is nice to use, and because of its attractive presentation helps one to learn as one goes about the task of particular identifications. One is constantly drawn aside by the pictures to look and learn on the way. It would have been helpful though to have had some line drawings in the introduction to the book and the definitions of characteristics of legumes. The author says "The distinction between the flowers of the *Acacia* type (Mimosaceae), *Cassia* type (Caesalpinaceae) and pea type (Fabaceae) is well known". Yes, we can recognise these gross differences, but some of us forget what these differences are based on in terms of flower structure and some of us never knew.

The book is, as expected of University of Queensland Press, well presented and seemingly rugged as it ought to be for use in the field. The sponsors are to be congratulated for their support of the book and thereby making its publication possible and at a relatively affordable price for the high quality of the product.