

# Reviews

Although the purpose of reviewing books in *Desert Plants* is not to sell them, in response to requests by readers who have found it difficult to obtain titles elsewhere, the Arboretum will, as a courtesy, make them available by mail at the prices set by the publishers, with the request that \$1.00 per book be added for postage and handling. Orders may be sent to Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum, P.O. Box AB, Superior, Arizona 85273.

### **The Cacti of the United States and Canada.**

Lyman Benson. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California. 1982. 1044 pp. \$85.00.

The author has outdone himself with this book. It simply is a classic which will stand unexcelled for decades. It is complete, thorough, well-written and appealing to read. Anyone with any interest at all in the subject should enjoy reading and studying it. Although the book is a reference work for study, the author has taken every pain to make it thoroughly self-explanatory. It can be understood by the rankest amateur.

Although a professional plant scientist would not need some chapters which are presented as background for the average reader, these chapters suddenly make the remaining technical chapters understandable to a much larger audience.

This book will probably be purchased by a large number of cactus and succulent enthusiasts who, aside from learning much about cacti, will painlessly receive the equivalent of a college course in plant science and ecology! It answers almost all questions a cactus lover might have on the subject. On the technical side, it is the last word on the subject for professional plant scientists involved with cacti of the United States and Canada.

Benson points out that "having a few plants brings about a creeping addiction to cultivating cacti" as a hobby and that the Cactus and Succulent Society of America now has 6,000 members! It publishes a cactus and succulent journal, but there are 19 other cactus and succulent journals currently published in the world as a whole!

The photographs (many by David Griffiths) and the drawings by Lucretia Breazeale Hamilton are valuable additions to the text. Many sections offer fascinating reading. Everyone from a stockbroker to a rancher ought to enjoy reading about the "Thornless Cactus Farming Company" fiasco that promised people they could grow 200 tons per acre of thornless cacti to be used as cattle feed. The book truly offers "something for everyone."

### **Reference Handbook on the Deserts of North America.**

Gordon L. Bender (ed.). Greenwood Press. Westport, Connecticut. 1982. 594 pp. \$75.00.

This book is a "must" for persons studying North American deserts and will be useful to those planning research projects or study in any of the regions treated. Although it has a certain unevenness of coverage coming from so many different experts writing the chapters, none of the pages are wasted and a lot of good information is presented.

It should prove extremely useful for college classes embarked on desert field trips. There seems to be a growing trend for colleges and universities throughout the United States to send classes to Arizona or other desert regions for such field trips. Often such trips are between semesters, during "interim" study periods, in the summer or during vacation periods, but generally carry college credit. Unfortunately, although the book would be an ideal textbook for such classes, the \$75.00 price tag will probably discourage many students. Colleges with desert field-trip programs will probably only order instructor copies, reducing the potential use of the book.

### **Deserts of the World.**

William G. McGinnies, Bram J. Goldman and Patricia Paylore. University of Arizona Press. Tucson, Arizona. 1968. 788 pp. \$18.00.

This classic book, although still in print at the 1968 price (even then a bargain), is being liquidated by the publisher and should be going out of print very soon. This prompted a re-review of the book by *Desert Plants* to determine if it is still of value. The verdict is that the book is a virtual gold-mine of information, being as useful today as it was in 1968. It truly represents an unbelievable bargain that should be taken advantage of by anyone with any interest at all in deserts and their plants.