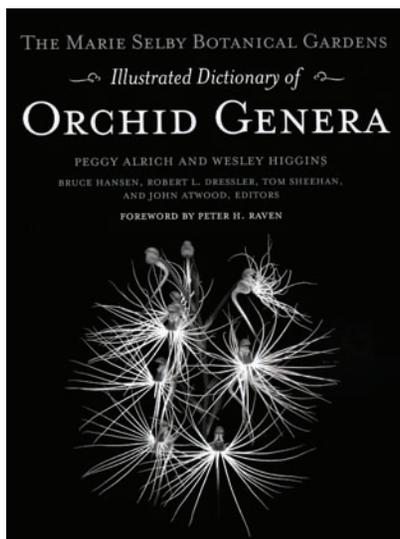


BOOK REVIEW

Alrich, P. & W.E. Higgins. 2008. **The Marie Selby Botanical Garden Illustrated Dictionary of Orchid Genera**. Comstock Publishing Association.



As I am listed as one of the editors of this dictionary, I should, perhaps, be disqualified as a reviewer. In my defense, I reviewed an early version of the manuscript, and it has clearly grown and evolved a great deal since I last checked over the list of names.

The authors estimate that there are about 850 accepted generic names treated here, but synonyms, orthographic variants, and names published before 1753 bring the *Dictionary* to more than three times that number. The casual reader might prefer a shorter treatment of the 850 or so valid and accepted names. Some names published before 1753 and never used again are of merely historical interest (if that). However, our understanding of orchid classification is constantly changing with the growth of molecular systematics (analysis of DNA) and continuing study using various other techniques. No one can say which of the validly published names we now consider synonyms may eventually prove to represent distinct groups in need of their own names. By including every generic orchid name or variant ever published (as nearly as is humanly possible), the authors have produced a book that will continue to be useful for many years.

To aid the reader, the validly published names that represent currently accepted genera (from *Aa* to *Zygostates*) are dark green, while paler green is used for validly published names that are not currently in use, and dark purple represents “superfluous” names, orthographic variants are shown in lilac, names published before 1753 are printed in brown, and the few names that (may) represent fossil orchid genera are shown in blue. Further the currently accepted or validly published names are each illustrated by a colored image of a flower.

The *Dictionary* includes an informative profile of the family Orchidaceae by D. H. Benzing, a list of selected references and a list of orchid taxonomists, from Ackerman to Zollinger, a very useful list of book/periodical abbreviations, a brief summary of nomenclatural rules, and a glossary.

The *Dictionary* is attractive and informative, and should continue to be very useful for many years to come.

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