

Cacti and Other Succulents

By R. GINNS. Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1963. 191 pp., 125 half-tone pl., 5 text fig. (Canadian distributor: Longmans Canada Ltd., Paperback Division, 55 Barber Greene Road, Don Mills, Ontario. \$1.85).

This small book is the most pleasant and handsome introduction to the study and culture of succulent plants which has yet appeared. The profusion of really excellent photographs, beautifully reproduced, shows for the most part close-up views of either small mature plants or of well-grown seedlings of large species, thus portraying the plants as the home grower is most likely to see them. There is also a generous smattering of photographs of larger plants including a few in the wild.

The text is well and interestingly written to present an outline of the habitats of succulent plants, much detail on methods of culture and, for the latter half of the book, a short description of a number of genera and species well suited to pot culture.

Although the book is written for an English audience, the directions for culture are generally satisfactory for Canadian growers. North American readers might like to use the University of California soil mixes rather than the John Innes formulas, or for epiphytic plants the chopped sphagnum moss medium developed and used with great success by the Montreal Botanic Garden.

Mr. Ginns gives a too brief list of more extensive reference books. Those wanting more information on the botany, especially the taxonomy of these plants should refer to:

The Cactaceae by N. L. Britton and J. N. Rose. Reprint 1964, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, N.Y. 1066 pp., 1279 ill., 2 vols. cloth \$20.00 (U.S.)

A Handbook of Succulent Plants by Hermann Jacobsen, 1960, Blandford Press, London. 1441 pp., 1617 fig., 3 maps, 3 vols. \$45.00 (U.S.)

Die Cactaceae, by Kurt Backeberg, recommended by Mr. Ginns, is a very beautiful German work but should be used with caution, since Backeberg is the most notorious splitter among cactus taxonomists, and many of his names will not stand.

The best American journal for amateurs is the *Cactus and Succulent Journal* of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America. This magazine is \$5.00 (U.S.) per year (6 issues) and may be ordered from Scott Haselton, Editor, 132 West Union Street, Pasadena, California.

To return to Mr. Ginns' book, we can recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone interested in succulent plants, especially cacti. The book is free from important technical blunders, most of the few detected being the result of incomplete statements, unavoidable in so short a work.

Anyone who buys the book may want to buy plants as well. Aside from local shops, the only Canadian grower of importance is Ben Veldhuis, Dundas, Ontario, who deals with the public mostly through visits to his greenhouses. Other sources may be found in classified columns of gardening magazines or in the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*.

E. W. GREENWOOD

Ramsayville, Ontario

Handbook of North American Birds, Vol. 1. Loons through Flamingos

Edited by RALPH S. PALMER. Yale University Press, New Haven. 1962. 567 pp. \$15.00.

When all volumes of this handbook are published they will constitute the most comprehensive assemblage of facts on North American birds that has ever been available. Everyone with a professional interest in birds, and many serious amateur students of ornithology, should have access to the set.

For each species, information is given under the following headings: diagnostic characters, detailed description of the



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