

## Handy books for Plant Identification

### Picture books

Chan, Elisabeth. 2003. Handy Pocket Guide to Tropical Plants (Periplus Nature Guides). Periplus Editions. Singapore. 64 pp.  
*For the Old World Tropics, but so many of the plants from there are here that it's quite useful.*

Warren, William. 2004. Handy Pocket Guide to Tropical Flowers (Periplus Nature Guides). Periplus Editions. Singapore. 64 pp.  
*For the Old World Tropics, but so many of the plants from there are here that it's quite useful.*

Hargreaves, Dorothy, and Bob Hargreaves. 1965. Tropical trees found in the Caribbean, South America, Central America, Mexico. Hargreaves Company, Inc., Kailua, Hawaii, 64 pp.  
*We're used to better photographic images these days, but for a long time the Hargreaves books were the only easy-to-use books for the New World Tropics. Still valuable. May be out of print.*

Hargreaves, Dorothy, and Bob Hargreaves. 1965. Tropical blossoms of the Caribbean. Hargreaves Company, Inc., Kailua, Hawaii, 64 pp.  
*We're used to better photographic images these days, but for a long time the Hargreaves books were the only easy-to-use books for the New World Tropics. Still valuable. May be out of print.*

Kuck, Loraine E., and Richard Tongg. 1958. Guide to Tropical and Semi-Tropical Flora: Hawaiian flowers & flowering trees. Charles E Tuttle Co (1958), Paperback, 168 pp.  
*Focused on Hawaii, but most of the plants are also seen here. Good introduction to how plants get from one place to another. Origins of most plants are given, so you can see which ones that started out here in Central America ended up in Hawaii.*

Barwick, Margaret. 2004. Tropical and Subtropical Trees: An Encyclopedia : An Encyclopedia. Timber Press. Portland, OR. 484 pp.  
*Beautiful illustrations and good descriptions, but hard to use if you're trying to identify a tree. It is arranged alphabetically by scientific name, not by family but by genus and species.*

### Organization by habitat

Zuchowski, Willow. 2005. A Guide to Tropical Plants of Costa Rica. Distribuidores Zona Tropical, S.A., Miami, FL. 529 pp.  
*Extremely useful for getting a good idea of what that new plant is. Information on traditional and medicinal uses as well.*

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### Organization by family

Carrasquilla R., Luis G. 2005. Trees and Shrubs of Panama [Árboles y Arbustos de Panamá]. University of Panama/National Environmental Authority [Universidad de Panamá/Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente]. 479 pp.

*The only book on this list devoted exclusively to the Panama plants. Excellent descriptions and photos. Fewer plants than in the Zuchowski book, but better illustrated for identification. Bilingual.*

Elpel, Thomas J. 2004. Botany in a Day: The Patterns Method of Plant Identification. HOPS Press. Pony, Montana. 221 pp.

*Designed for beginners in North America, but the principles apply to all plant identification, and many of the families are found here in Panama.*

### Keys

Gentry, Alwyn H. 1993. A Field Guide to the Families and Genera of Woody Plants of Northwest South America (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru), with Supplementary Notes on Herbaceous Taxa. University of Chicago Press. 895 pp.

*Alwyn Gentry was a botanist who wanted to make tropical plant identification easier than it was a couple of decades ago. Once you know a little botany, you'll want this book.*

Keller, Roland. 2004. Identification of Tropical Woody Plants in the Absence of Flowers: A Field Guide. 2nd Ed. Birkhäuser Verlag. Berlin. 294 pp + plates.

*Another good key for tropical plants.*

### General reference

Heckadon-Moreno, Stanley. 2004. Naturalists on the Isthmus of Panama: A hundred years of natural history on the biological bridge of the Americas. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Panama. 271 pp.

*Interesting history of European naturalists studying Panama.*

Kricher, John. 1997. A Neotropical Companion. An introduction to the animals, plants, & ecosystems of the New World tropics. 2nd Ed. Princeton University Press. 451 pp.

*Very good overview of tropical ecosystems in the New World. Readable, too.*

Mabberley, D.J. 1997. The Plant-Book. A portable dictionary of the vascular plants. 2nd Ed. Cambridge University Press. 858 pp.

*A botanist I know said that if she had to restrict herself to one plant book, this would be it. You'll want to become somewhat familiar with botanical terminology, though, before it's of much use.*