BOOK REVIEWS

New Books Received


Taxonomy and Ecology of Woody Plants in North American Forests (Excluding Mexico and Subtropical Florida)


Identifying trees and shrubs and classifying them into communities are important parts of understanding forest ecosystems. This book merges information on plant taxonomy and identification of individual species with the identification of forest communities and the site-environment relationships that define the locations of these communities. The first part of the book reviews general information on plant taxonomy, nomenclature, and the use and construction of identification keys. The authors do a good job of providing important references on the history of plant classification and development of taxonomic keys that may guide the reader into more detailed readings on these topics. The second part of the book, which represents about 60 percent of the text, focuses on descriptions of individual species of gymnosperms and woody angiosperms. Gymnosperms and woody angiosperms are separate sections in the book with chapters focusing on species by genus within a given order or orders. The authors provide a very useful reference with detailed physical descriptions of the majority of woody species found in the United States and Canada. I was a bit disappointed that the book did not include a key at the front of each chapter to go along with these descriptions. This book should probably be used in conjunction with a taxonomic key, if identifying plant species is the reader’s goal. The final section of the book builds on the identification of individual species by introducing the classification of forest communities via cover types based on current vegetation following the National Vegetation Classification Standard (NVCS). The authors do a good job of discussing other classification schemes and the factors (primarily climate, soils, topography, and disturbance) that influence why certain species group into communities. This tie from individual species to communities makes this book an important reference text in helping students understand the organization of forest ecosystems. This book should not be read straight through, but used as a reference jumping between descriptions of species and cover types. The authors facilitate this interaction between sections by providing numbers referencing the dominant cover types associated with each genus. The book is designed for use as a text in undergraduate forest dendrology classes, but I believe it would be useful in upper-level or graduate classes on forest community ecology and as a reference book for all professionals dealing with forest ecosystems.

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