

The Book of Leaves A Leaf-by-Leaf Guide to Six Hundred of the World's Great Trees

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This is a beautiful, lavishly illustrated book - at once hugely informative as well as an entertaining read. Despite its extensive coverage of tree species, it is not for use as a hiking guide as it weighs 2.3 kg! The press release accompanying its publication says it all and is difficult to improve on. *The Book of Leaves* offers a visually stunning and scientifically engaging guide to 600 of the most impressive and beautiful leaves from around the world. Each leaf is reproduced here at its actual size in full-colour photographs taken on a lightbox and is accompanied by details of the range, distribution, abundance and habitat of the tree on which it is found, as well as brief scientific and historical accounts.” Press releases can often be misleading and convey attributes or compliments for which the publication is not worthy of. In this case every word is true.

A quick perusal of the biographies of the author and editor will illustrate why this volume lives up to such praise.

Following a short “Foreword” and “Introduction” the reader is treated to a 34-page section which sets out the basics of “What is a Tree”, “What is a leaf”, “Leaf Function”, “The Variety of Leaves”, “Leaf Shape and Arrangement”, “Leaf Anatomy”, “Understanding

Plant Names” and “Identifying Tree Leaves”. For the non-professional this part of the book is essential reading and leads to a better understanding of the contents of the book. It is also useful as a revision for those professionally involved with trees.

The next approximately 600 pages are devoted to descriptions of the individual trees using the leaf as the starting point. The material for each species is laid out in a very readable format, including distribution maps, which though small in size are extremely useful. The photographs of the leaves are wonderful (actual size in most cases).

This book deserves to be on the shelves of anybody interested in trees but particularly professionals including foresters, arborists, horticulturists, botanists, teachers etc.

Kevin J. Hutchinson