

Reviews

The Pruning of Trees, Shrubs and Conifers

George E. Brown

Faber & Faber, £9

In this book Dr. Brown achieves, in a very thorough and up-to-date manner not only the purpose which the title suggests, but also he ranges widely over associated fields of information which are always important and often essential adjuncts to the pruning operation. It is a very comprehensive work within the limits succinctly defined in a preface yet, because the author has done his job so thoroughly, one regrets the deliberate exclusion of any detailed divergence into the art of Tree Surgery which is so widely neglected in this country and, I suspect, even if less so, in Britain also. Still, at various points in the book the author emphasises the importance of Tree Surgery to an extent that it is plain to the reader that anyone, or any public body, concerned with the pruning of trees young, and particularly old, should have a competent knowledge of the subject.

The treatment and training of trees in the nursery stage both as young standard stock and for "semi mature" stock is rightly emphasised as being vital and how this can be done is well described.

Pest and disease control are well if briefly dealt with and one is glad to note that Mr. Brown does not miss the cue to emphasise that pruning wounds should be treated with protective dressings immediately after cuts are made but, at the same time, one would have liked to have had more on the efficacy of various chemicals for cut and wound dressings on trees.

Another feature the perhaps too exacting reviewer had hoped to read about was the old art of topiary but this is dealt with only very briefly. An example of the range and practical value of this book is to be found in Appendix III. Tools and equipment, and Appendix IV Saw Sharpening and Maintenance, the latter being a classic in clarifying on the detail of "saw doctoring," an art now unfortunately almost unknown amongst foresters. Neither does the author overlook the possibility of things going wrong and

includes an Appendix VI by Grace M. Webber, S.R.N., O.N.D., on Accident Prevention and First Aid in which the modern tendency to long hair styles is adverted to as a potential hazard in the use of machinery.

One of the outstanding features of this book is the illustrations and the 86 explanatory photographic plates, the latter in particular making it an instructive joy to turn to as reference to the text. Another most useful feature is the Alphabetical List of Genera and their Specific Pruning Needs under which in 222 pages some 450 genera are dealt with, some, such as *Rosa*, in considerable detail. Few relevant genera can have been missed out and the inclusion of such marginal species as *Empetrum nigrum* emphasise its range. However, the forester might wonder if the conifers get their fair share in this section. *Abies* has thirteen lines and *Picea* seven, both genera which contain many ornamental species, while *Quercus* gets more than three pages and *Populus* two. However from the more general point of view this alphabetical list is a mine of information on a great number of particular species.

It is particularly valuable as a quick reference to the treatment of most tree or shrub species in use as single or grouped specimens, or as hedging plants. The difficult problem for most amateurs, that is the time to prune, or to clip a hedge, is always dealt with thoroughly.

As with most works on gardening and horticulture generally written for conditions in Britain the passages on climatic influences should be read with caution as our more tolerant climate in Ireland imposes less severe limits on growing many tender species. Dr. Brown's approach to such genera as *Fuchsia*, *Eucalyptus*, and some others, emphasises this point.

As might be expected the author's nomenclature is immaculately correct and up-to-date and he does not forget either the lesser beings such as your reviewer, when he includes a glossary which unravels the mysteries of such terms as bigeneric hybrid, chimaera, cultivar and so on.

In these times when versatility is much in demand from foresters I feel that a book of this sort should be available to them in their student days and to hand as a reference afterwards. To any of us who are involved in arboretum and landscaping work of any kind the book is essential for reading and permanent reference.

In the wider field I am quite sure that it should be available to and studied by all horticulturalists, arboriculturalists and landscape planners working in the public service, and hopefully, it might find its way onto the tables of our more reputable building firms.

In reviewing one tends to look for points of legitimate criticism, and incidences of inaccuracy, but there are little if any grounds for this sort of thing in this well constructed and knowledgeable book which, the reviewer for one, has read with great pleasure and benefit.

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