

Book Reviews

OBSERVERS BOOK OF TREES. H. L. Edlin. 75p.

The Observer book series covers a wide range of topics from natural history to sport. The present publication is a revised and updated version of an earlier edition on trees. It is broadly divisible into three sections. The first deals with the concept of tree growth which is expanded further to deal with the forest from primeval time up to present day forestry. Brief mention is also made of Ireland's afforestation programme. The second section, by far the largest, deals with the broadleaved species. It covers the major tree and shrub species to be found in Britain and Ireland in some detail. Among the topics covered for each species are its most likely habitat and if it is non indigenous, some interesting information on the derivation of its common name, and when it was first introduced into Britain. This is followed by a description of the twig in winter, its leaf formation and flowering habit. The final portion describes the wood and the bark type of the tree. Each species description is accompanied by a colour plate showing the leaf form, fruits, the twig in winter and the whole-tree form in winter and summer. Individual tree bark form is shown in half tone photographs.

The final section dealing with the conifers follows the same format as that for the broadleaved species. A very simple and brief method of grouping conifers is outlined in the opening section. There follows a description of the more common conifers to be found in everyday forestry in Britain and Ireland. Experiences in Ireland with contorta pine find a special mention. In addition to the morphological description of each species and its flowering habit statistics on its height and girth growth are also given. As for the hardwood species a colour plate accompanies each description showing details of branchlet, flower and the whole tree form.

As a general treatise on trees the book achieves its aims. As its main market is likely to be the amateur naturalist its handy size allows it to be carried readily into the field. It is a pity that the layout was not better planned and followed the same order for each species. The black and white photographs in the introductory section give the impression that forestry is somewhat behind the times. Updating in this section would be in tune with the improvements in the rest of the book compared with the earlier edition. The descriptions and plates for each species are however not

sufficiently detailed for the discerning dendrologist. As an introduction to forestry and trees it more than serves its purpose for the young naturalist. In addition it is well within his or her financial reach.

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