

*FUNGI THAT DECAY PONDEROSA PINE.* Robert L. Gilbertson. The University of Arizona Press. 197 pp., illustrated. £4.00.

SOME forest mycologists, I think, have a pathological fear of fungal taxonomy. Unfortunately so, because the precise identification of a pathogen is a necessary prerequisite in the formulation of a disease control programme. Gilbertson's manual, however, should help to counteract and remedy this general aversion. A more popular title for his book would read "Basidiomycete taxonomy made easy". The spoonfuls of antidote helping the medicine go down are administered in the form of concise diagnostic descriptions of the various Basidiomycete fungi interspersed with clear line drawings of their microscopic characters.

With the aid of the manual's excellent analytical keys and checklists one can precisely recognise over 220 species of wood-decaying fungi known to occur on ponderosa pine over its entire range. The manual includes a wealth of information about the ecological significance of these fungi and their decay relationships. A comprehensive glossary is appended for those of us who have gone rusty on mycological terminology.

Classification of the Basidiomycetes into families and genera is still in a state of flux as a result of efforts to establish a system based on phylogenetic relationships. Gilbertson, however, has combined current systems of nomenclature in his key rather than strictly adhering to the old Friesian families and genera. This results in the use of nomenclature that may be somewhat unfamiliar to forest pathologists but the changes were inevitable and are already well established in the literature for most orders of the Hymenomycetes.

Although the manual specifically relates to decay fungi of Ponderosa Pine it will also provide a very useful tool for identifying Basidiomycetes on other timber, particularly other conifers. The book is highly recommended to any specialist working with the Basidiomycetes. It is guaranteed to make those long hours spent working with the microscope a lot more interesting and rewarding.

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