

## BOOKS AND NEW MEDIA

**In Praise of Plants.** Francis Halle, Translator, David Lee. 2002. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 334 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 0-88192-550-0.

This is not an easy book to review. It is, however, a substantial addition to the field of "comparative biology." Basically, the author compares the plant kingdom to the animal kingdom. The comparison is made at various levels from the biochemical and cellular to the organismic and ecological. As a result, it should become clear to readers that plants are not only as complex and interesting as animals, but often more so.

Francis Halle is professor emeritus at the University of Montpellier, France, and a world renowned tropical botanist. David Lee, professor of biological sciences at Florida International University in Miami made the easily readable translation.

*In Praise of Plants* contains some controversial segments. Perhaps the most obvious is its comparison of animal to plant hormones. Halle considers the pioneer work of Went and Thi-

mann to be flawed, and doubts that phototropisms in plants are due to phytohormones.

One of the most useful features of the book is the ninety-nine pen-and-ink drawings that are dispersed throughout the eight chapters. The drawings are unique, often fanciful, and invariably illuminating. Without them, the text would be much less instructive.

It is difficult to categorize this delightful volume. It certainly is not a textbook. Yet, it does not fit either of the main types of books published by Timber Press: field identification guides and horticultural books. Whatever its designation, this book is novel and thought provoking, and would extend and sharpen the thinking of a biologist of any stripe.

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