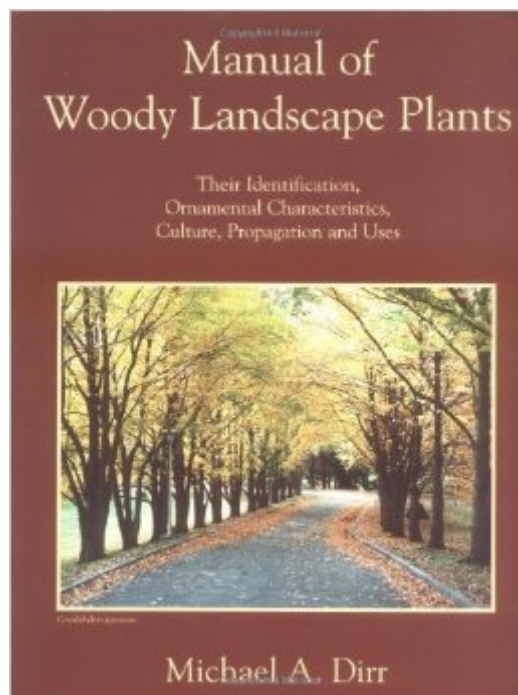


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Manual Of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation And Uses



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

About nine years ago I coughed up the (considerable) sum for the 1990 edition of this book (Dirr puts out a new edition every few years) because, upon casually perusing it, I saw that it covered some plants that I was interested in, and no other book in the store did. Well. It languished for a while, but when I started getting interested in horticultural plantings (my own and those I encountered on my walks) I started delving into it. Before too long I found a strange thing: this book seems to know everything about horticultural trees and bushes--certainly everything that I was interested in, living first in southern Wisconsin, then northern Kentucky, and finally northern Illinois. It finally dawned on me that this was the reference work I had always wanted. Even when I (very rarely!) thought it didn't cover a plant, it usually did anyway (perhaps making short shrift of it in a slightly different spot). As with any other great tool, learning to use it is an iterative process: the more you learn, the better you use it, and so learn yet more. So if you are a plant person, just buy this book, rather than half-a-dozen half-baked horticultural "theme" books. You get a great reference, and as a real bonus, you get Michael Dirr's enthusiasm and planterly asides enlivening the text. (And the paperback version is also sturdy and usable.) Put it next to your dictionary, so it's within easy reach. You'll need it.

Regardless if you live in Key West, San Diego, Seattle, International Falls or New York City, Dirr's Manual of Woody Landscape Plants will help you select, culture and successfully grow the correct plants for your area. It is the single-greatest source of information on landscape materials I have ever seen. Thousands of varieties are also listed. For pictures, check out Dirr's Hardy Trees & Shrubs, but to get educated, you've GOT to get your hands on this one!

I have been an avid gardner since I was a child. My garden library has grown to several hundred volumes by now, but "The Manual" is heads above all the rest. I purchased my first copy of Dr. Dirr's Manual about 10 years ago. It quickly became my favorite reference and was rarely on the bookshelf, most often it lives on my bedside table. When the latest edition came out I bought a hardback copy. Quite an investment, but well worth it. I had literally worn my old paperback copy out. Dr. Dirr offers by far the most complete description of the largest number of shrubs, trees, and vines that I have ever seen in a single volume. The advice on culture and propagation are particularly detailed and helpful, but his writing style is what really makes this book unique. At first glance The Manual appears to be a whopping and potentially dry tome, (there are no photos, but it is filled with excellent line drawings by Bonnie Dirr. I understand that a photo CD is available to accompany the Manual, but have not seen one) - but read just a few pages and you will be hooked by Dirr's style. This book reads more like a collection of humorous essays than a standard reference manual. Michael Dirr puts much of himself and his personal experience with many of these plants into every page. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of the Manual is the number of cultivars Dr. Dirr lists and provides descriptions for under each species. You are almost sure to find a description of any variety that your local garden center carries. With each new edition Dr. Dirr does a masterful job of keeping up with all the new cultivars cropping up in our catalogs and garden centers. The result is not only the most informative book of it's kind on the market, but a delightful read for cold winter nights. It has become the benchmark by which I judge other garden books, and probably will be for many years to come.

I have a lot of reference books covering landscaping, plant propagation, identification, and disease problems. Dr. Dirr has done a fantastic job of compiling all of this information (and a few welcome opinions) for a couple thousand landscape plants into one concise work. When I have a question, this book is usually my first stop. Information on common species is very comprehensive. However lesser used landscape plants are covered in an abbreviated manner, which sometimes forces me to find other resources (which are not difficult to locate thanks to the large number of cited

references). The indexes of both common and scientific names make this sizable volume easy to navigate and usable. The glossary and sections on morphology and identification are handy, especially for beginners or those of us who have been out of college for a while! Additionally, the thoughtful layout and readable type size make this manual more usable than other similar books I have encountered. Dr. Dirr has created an excellent volume which is on my short list of horticultural reference works.

Don't confuse this text with a light weight treatise on the author's favorite plants. Dr. Dirr's work gives insightful knowledge on those he dislikes to those he favors with equal depth of detail. I have been referring to this work for over ten years and have not found a serious error in that time. The Manual of Woody Landscape Plants has become the Bible at my place of work. From botanical classification to the plant's landscape value, I have not found a book that is its equal. My sole reservation is the quality of the binding. I've owned both the hard and soft covered books and both bindings have been inferior. They deteriorate not from abuse but from constant use far too quickly for a reference source of this level.

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