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Review of Linda W. Davis, *Weed Seeds of the Great Plains*

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WEED SEEDS OF THE GREAT PLAINS: A HANDBOOK
FOR IDENTIFICATION.

By Linda W. Davis. Published for the Cooperative Extension Service of Kansas State University by the University Press of Kansas, Lawrence (Kansas). \$25.00. vi + 145 p. + 280 pl.; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-7006-0651-3. 1993.

The purpose of this useful 145-page book is to provide both a source of comparative information on seeds of 280 weedy plant species in the Great Plains and a means of identifying them. The region covered is the central USA, from northern Texas

into southern Canada. The seeds are arranged taxonomically, according to the *Flora of the Great Plains* (Great Plains Flora Association, 1986, 1992). A key of sorts, based on gross external characters, enables one to place the seed into one of 22 descriptive groups. Identification after that is by comparison of written descriptions, photographic silhouettes, and color photographs of species in the group.

Individual descriptions are clear, and I appreciated the obvious effort toward consistency. Each description contains information on seed outline, cross-section shape, form, surface texture, color, size, and general location within the Great Plains. The silhouettes are useful, especially for highly distinctive seeds. As far as I am concerned, however, the 286 color photographs are the most valuable part of the book. These photographs are crisp, clear, and highly illustrative of the subtle distinctions among similar seeds.

One change would have made the book even more useful for seed identification. The more similar the seeds, the more difficult they are to distinguish accurately. Thus, identification would be easier if the descriptions and color photographs were arranged into artificial groups by color, sheen, size and distinctive external characters, rather than taxonomically. Although some duplication of species occurs among the 22 groups, a hierarchy in the key and cross-referencing among groups within the key could have been used to minimize duplication of descriptions and photographs required. Overall, I am delighted to have this book and recommend it to anyone who needs to identify weed seeds and, in fact, to anyone fascinated by the beauty and variation among plants displayed in nature.

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