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Book Review: *Grasses of Colorado* By Robert B. Shaw

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Grasses of Colorado. By Robert B. Shaw. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2008. xi + 650 pp. Maps, figures, tables, glossary, literature cited, index. $ 75.00 cloth.

This comprehensive, systematic treatment of the grasses of Colorado is going to become the standard for new floras in the state. With this book the "student of grasses" will be able to more accurately identify and key the species within this economically important and unique family. Users will need to read the introductions and follow the author's excellent instructions in how to use the book to be most successful. There are brief but adequate discussions of physiography and ecoregions that place Colorado's grass vegetation in the proper context with surrounding states. The section on the "grass plant" is particularly well written and illustrated.

The volume includes a checklist of Colorado grasses and a discussion of keys, followed by the "Key to the Genera," a tested one modified from F.W. Gould and R.B. Shaw's *Grass Systematics* (1983). The keys to and descriptions of each of the 335 grass species treated in this flora are artificial and do not reflect phylogenetic relationships. The author is a splitter at the generic level, recognizing genera such as *Phlaris* and *Phalaroides, Aegilops* and *Triticum,* and *Melica* and *Bromelica.* All the keys to genera and species are dichotomous, indented, and numbered, giving users the benefits of all of those features. The couplet leads begin with the same word, a plant structure, and then alternative states to guide users efficiently to an identification. Species keys and descriptions are carefully prepared to document most of the variation in each of the grass taxa within the state. The format of the species description includes scientific name, partial synonymy, common names, life span, origin, season of growth (C_3/C_4), and morphological characteristics for the species.

Each of the 335 species is depicted with a high-quality line drawing to help in the identification process. These illustrations are meant to represent the morphology of a typical specimen of the species. Notes concerning habitat, comments about the species, and literature citations follow. Shaw uses and cites many of the important treatments, e.g., A.S. Hitchcock's *Manual of the Grasses of the United States* (1951), A. Cronquist et al. *Intermountain Flora*, vol. 6 (1977), and M.E. Barkworth et al. *Flora of North America* vols. 24 and 25 (2007, 2003 respectively). I successfully keyed several grass species to their proper identification with ease.

This book is of considerable value for land managers, researchers, and students. It represents the state of knowledge of the Poaceae in Colorado and is an important addition to grass literature. **Stephan L. Hatch**, *S.M. Tracy Herbarium, Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, Texas A&M University.*

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