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Jewels of the Plains: Wildflowers of the Great Plains Grasslands and Hills. By Claude A. Barr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. Maps, photographs, glossary, bibliography, index. xxv + 236 pp. \$19.95.

After earning a degree from Drake University, author Claude Barr settled on a homestead just south of the Black Hills. In addition to his principal occupation as a rancher, Barr began to observe and propagate native plants in his small garden. One of his earliest ventures into writing about his avocation was an article in 1930 on the pasqueflower. He commented, "I was paid \$20 for it, which seemed like a munificent price." This modest effort led to at least one hundred articles over the next fifty years.

Jewels of the Plains is not simply a compilation of plant characteristics and a recitation of hints about how to grow them. Rather, it is a knowledgeable, loving record of one man's inquiries into the natural history of living things all but ignored by most people. The book's

introductory chapter is a brief overview of plains geography, climate, and flora. A few remarks about specific landforms from southern Canada to the Texas Panhandle impart both a sense of place and the author's manner of interpreting the landscape. The sense of place also occurs throughout the book in references to collecting trips in localities such as Crow Butte (Nebraska), Palo Duro Canyon (Texas), Flag Mountain (South Dakota), and Carrizo Mesa (Colorado). The body of the volume includes descriptions and propagation notes for approximately one hundred forty genera of plants, plus general discussions of two large diverse groups, cacti and ferns.

Barr was not hesitant about expressing preferences for some subjects of his research. Likewise, he left little to the reader's imagination when recommending that some plants are better left in the wild. Writing about *Vicia sparsifolia*, a widely distributed native legume, he observed "the roots and slender rhizomes are deep-seated, ineradicable, and insufferable. . . . Beware!" (p. 184).

More than one hundred color plates of species mentioned in the text lend an appreciation for the variety of plant size, structure, and flower color among the region's flora. A two-page map of the plains includes state boundaries, major streams, and topographic features referred to in the text. (The cartographer, however, translocated the Black Hills to southwestern North Dakota.) The book concludes with a brief discussion of Barr's botanical contributions; this section was written by Ronald R. Weedon of Chadron State College.

In the course of receiving an award in 1958, Claude Barr explained his philosophies in this manner: "My life's ambition is a *full* life (I have it), a well-rounded life (I'm working toward it), and a life that has made the best of the opportunities at hand." Most people his age (seventy-one at that time) might have eased up a bit, but nearly forty more published articles were still to come from his inquiring mind. Barr did not live to see this one manifestation of more than a half-century of study and writing. He died in the summer of 1982, about a month short of

his ninety-fifth birthday and nearly a year before *Jewels of the Plains* came off the press.

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