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### Review of *Colorado Flora: Eastern Slope* by William A. Weber.

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**Colorado Flora: Eastern Slope.** William A. Weber. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1990. Maps, figures, photographs, glossary, indexes, xxxvi + 396 pp. \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0-87081-214-9).

All 2260 plant species of eastern-slope Colorado--from the continental divide east to the Nebraska and Kansas borders--can be identified using this book. That figure includes not only the native species but also the numerous introduced ones that survive without cultivation and often provide severe competition for the native flora. Much of Colorado's native plains flora was eliminated in the past century by plowing and by grazing livestock. It is largely replaced by a few durable native and many aggressive exotic species that thrive under those conditions, but remnants of the original flora exist on escarpments and in a few level places.

This book complements its author's *Colorado Flora: Western Slope* (1987) and *Rocky Mountain Flora* (1972), and the three provide the easiest way to identify all the state's plants. Although it has 64 color photographs and 103 pages of line drawings, this book is not to be riffled through in hope of finding a likeness of a plant. It is a technical treatment, as well it must be to cram so much information into 396 pages. Three hundred

sixty-one pages are devoted to a botanical key: a directed succession of paired statements that ultimately lead the reader to a plant's identity, assuming the correct member of each pair is always chosen. The extensive glossary and the informative introduction help the user in making such choices; for many plants a good hand lens or microscope is needed to see the detail necessary to make them. The key is loaded with technical terms but works very well. The book is unusually personal--helpful comments are given throughout, and its author's insights into the plants are evident--despite its almost telegraphic style. Even the etymology of each plant's name is given. Weber's taxonomic nomenclature is unconventional, as he admits, and professional botanists will fulminate, but one is free to use any scientifically legitimate name for a plant, choosing from published synonyms and using specified criteria. Still, the use of unconventional names makes for some difficulty when seeking further information in other publications.

Colorado's montane flora is better known than that of its plains, and that fact is evident in this book. Like the tourists and settlers, botanists have tended to press the accelerator (or crack the whip) to get across the plains as fast as possible. With their verdant promise of sylvan glens and cool alpine parks crowded with colorful and diverse plants, the dark mountains visible through the prairie heat and haze are just irresistible. The truly revealing statement, however, is given in Weber's Introduction: "Colorado botanists have tended to ignore the eastern plains because of the thunderstorms and tornadoes, the biting midges, and the heat, and have turned most of their attention to the mountains" (xiii)--as if the mountains didn't have their equally-intimidating hazards! **Robert B. Kaul**, *School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.