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Spring 2006

Review of *Wildflowers of Montana* By Donald Anthony Schiemann

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McCracken, Clayton, "Review of *Wildflowers of Montana* By Donald Anthony Schiemann" (2006). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 823.
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Wildflowers of Montana. By Donald Anthony Schiemann. Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2005. v + 306 pp. Maps, illustrations, photographs, appendix, glossary, bibliography, index. \$22.00 paper.

I have always walked outdoors and among the wildflowers with a feeling of elation and awe at the beauty that has been entrusted to us.

—D.A. Schiemann

Wildflowers of Montana is in the stack of books I take on botanizing expeditions. At bedtime one or two pages read as I fall asleep ends the day nicely. The book is well designed as a quick reference to 350 of Montana's best flowering plants.

Robert Dorn's *Vascular Plants of Montana* (1984), our standard reference to Montana plants, is a field manual. It was lightened by using abbreviated descriptions and only essential drawings. Don Schiemann's photographs, with his clear and complete descriptions, are a handy way to confirm what we have keyed out in Dorn.

The precise descriptions are clear and flow easily. Essential technical terms are used as needed for brevity and consistent descriptions. The introduction, which provides the basics of plant anatomy, explains the terms, and the glossary conveniently refreshes one's memory.

Sharply focused photographs offer a gestalt of a plant by showing its form and the greenness of its vegetation and by blending colors in a manner neither line drawings nor descriptions would achieve. The color renditions are accurate, with only a few exceptions. Neither the dwarf clover of the Beartooth Plateau nor the short styled onion photos shows the rosy purple that characterizes those flowers.

The book's layout allows for quick use. Having the description on the left page and photographs on the right

eliminates the need to flip back and forth to see both pictures and text. The key, based on color and flower shape, works well. Schiemann keeps plants with their family or genus, a practice, regrettably, not followed in other recent flower identification books. As an example, having the description and photographs of four plants in the *Pyrola* genus together provides a much appreciated comparison. And having the location and date for every photograph is a bonus.

Weeds? Exotic plants? How does one treat them in a flower identification book? They are an established part of today's Montana landscape, and Schiemann accepts them for the efficient and beautiful plants they are. Who has not been asked about the attractive purple thistle that turns out to be spotted knapweed? His photograph of hound's tongue shows the velvety royal purple petals darkening as they lead into the brick-red and yellow center.

Would this guide be the first choice for someone focused on flowers of the Northern Great Plains? Perhaps, if combined in a stack with other guides. There is no one book that adequately covers eastern Montana plants. This one, as its title promises, is a selection from botanical niches throughout the state. Would it be an appropriate book for someone traveling through Montana? You bet! Clayton H. McCracken, *Billings, Montana*.