

Trees of Eastern North America

By Gil Nelson, Christopher J. Earle, and Richard Spellenberg. 2014. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, NJ, USA, 08540-5237. 720 pages, 29.95 USD, Paper.

There are several field guides available for eastern North American trees. One of the more recent is the Sibley guide (Sibley 2009), the National Wildlife Federation field guide (Kershner *et al.* 2008), and the Peterson guide (Petrides 1988). The Petrides (1988) guide covers roughly the same geographic area as this guide whereas the other two are US and Canada. Nelson and Spellenberg are also listed as authors of the Kershner *et al.* (2008) guide.

Back to the Nelson *et al.* guide that is the subject of this review. This guide which is a hefty 720 pages, covers virtually all species of tree expected to be found in the eastern part of North America which is roughly defined as the Northwest Territories/Nunavut boundary and a line extending southward and slightly east of the Manitoba/Saskatchewan border continuing southward along or near the 100th meridian until it enters Texas. In Texas the line traces along the eastern edge of the Edwards Plateau to Austin and then south ending at the Gulf of Mexico at Corpus Christi. In contrast, the Peterson guide (Petrides 1988) considers all of the trees east of the Black Hills and Rocky Mountains. Thus, coverage is a bit different.

The present guide includes virtually all trees that “grow without the aid of human cultivation” (page 7) within the above-described area. This includes a number of exotic species that have escaped cultivation, which is a lot of species considering the guide encompasses all of Florida where many exotics have been planted as ornamentals. Also, because it includes a portion of south Texas, species of a more southwestern distribution are included. This species coverage is very similar to the Sibley (2009) guide except that Sibley includes many ornamental trees that are not at present

known to naturally reproduce independent of human cultivation.

Of the alternative guides mentioned, this guide has up-to-date classification, and is reasonably compact so that it can be used as a field guide. The Sibley (2009) guide is not of a convenient size to carry on field trips. The quality of illustrations is far better than the other guides mentioned so that identification is easier. This includes the distribution maps which are sized to be clear. The text is error-free and no other editorial issues were noted while reading.

This guide can be recommended for each of the above reasons. It adds a very favorable choice to the selection of eastern tree guides presently available and is mid-way in price among each of the guides mentioned in this review. If you wish a new guide, an alternative guide to supplement others, or an off-the-shelf tree reference, I recommend this book for that purpose. I would also not hesitate to use this guide as a text for identification in a course of dendrology or any class involving plant identification. Foresters, horticulturists, wildlife managers, and other professionals will also find it usable. It adds to the many high-quality field guides now being published by Princeton University Press.

Literature Cited

- Kershner, B., D. Mathews, G. Nelson, R. Spellenberg, T. Purinton, A. Block, G. Moore, and J. W. Thieret. 2008. Field guide to trees of North America. New York, NY, Sterling.
 Petrides, G. A. 1988. A field guide to eastern trees. New York, NY, Houghton Mifflin.
 Sibley, D. A. 2009. The Sibley guide to trees. New York, NY, Knopf.

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