

BOTANY

Ginkgo in China

By Cao Fuliang. 2007. China Forestry Publishing House, Number 7, Liuhai Hutong, Denei Street, Xicheng District, Beijing, China. 300 pages. 98 CNY.

Ginkgo is a genus of highly unique plants with one extant species, *Ginkgo biloba*, which is a long-lived, stress-tolerant, disease-, pest-, and fire-resistant dioecious tree, referred to as a living fossil by Charles Darwin in 1859. The only surviving member of its family, Ginkgo leaf was first mentioned in Lan Mao's book *Pharmaceutical Natural History of Southern Yunnan* (1436) in the Ming dynasty of China. Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), a German botanist, firstly gave a scientific description of this species in his book *Amoenitatum exoticarum* (1712), and formly gave it its name according to a phonetic pronunciation of a Chinese or Japanese word.

It was reported that fossils recognizably related to modern *Ginkgo biloba* date back to the Permian, some 270 million years ago. The genus diversified and spread throughout Laurasia during the middle Jurassic and Cretaceous, but became much rarer thereafter. At the end of the Pliocene, Ginkgo fossils disappeared from the fossil record everywhere apart from a small area of central China where the modern species survived. Chinese people, especially the monks in history formally, have long cultivated Ginkgo, thereby contributing to its survival as a species. All the present Ginkgo trees originated from China and were introduced into Europe in the 1700s, and then spread to other continents.

Ginkgo not only has scientific value in terms of research on its evolution and genetic tenacity, but also its medicinal and ornamental applications. Ginkgo has been used in medicinal botanicals in China for more than 2000 years. Nowadays, more and more medicinal functions of its leaves and seeds are being extensively revealed by scientists all over the world, with a focus on the standardized *Ginkgo biloba* extract (GBE) being prepared from the dried green leaves. At present, Ginkgo has become one of the most common trees along the sidewalks in many cities of the world due to its urban tolerant traits and the beautiful shape and colour.

China is the hometown of modern Ginkgo trees. The small-sized natural Ginkgo populations were extensively distributed over different geographical areas of China. The cultivation area of Ginkgo covers wider re-

gions. The germplasm resource of Ginkgo is abundant. Ancient Chinese carried out preliminarily studies or observations on the trees. However, afterwards, there were not too many new studies in China due to the unstable or abnormal social and political situation. Since the 1980s, Chinese scientists have carried out a series of comprehensive studies on the trees. The book *Ginkgo in China* is a systematic summation of these studies. As well, the book collected and analysed other abundant information on the Ginkgo at home and abroad.

The book covers almost every aspect of the Ginkgo, such as its origin, evolution and taxonomy, history of cultivation and utilization, natural populations and cultivation areas, biological and ecological characteristics, cultivation techniques, exploitation and use of Ginkgo resources, genetics and breeding, and so on. Chapter one, is an outline of the Ginkgo's name, and its economic, ecological, social, cultural, scientific values, developmental status, and prospects; Chapter two covers the origin, evolution and taxonomy of the Ginkgo; Chapter three, the history of cultivation and utilization of the Ginkgo at home and abroad; Chapter four, the natural populations and cultivation regions of the Ginkgo; Chapter five: the biological characteristics of ginkgo; Chapter six, the cultivation techniques of ginkgo; Chapter seven, the comprehensive exploitation and utilization of Ginkgo resources; Chapter eight, the germplasm and breeding of the Ginkgo; Chapter nine, reputed varieties, strains or individuals of Ginkgo in China; Chapter 10, key areas of Ginkgo production; and Chapter 11, the development of the culture of the Ginkgo.

The book is well written with few errors, and can be easily understood by non-scientists. As a comprehensive book, it would be suitable for anyone who is engaged in various areas of research or application in relation to ginkgo. Hopefully, it would become a valuable reference for them.

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Comprehensive Monograph of Contemporary Medicinal Plants (Volumes I-IV)

By Zhao Zhongzhen, Xiao Peigen. World Book Publishing House, Number 137, Chaonei Street, Beijing, China. 2008. 4 volumes: total 2180 pages. 368 CNY Cloth.

In a broader sense, the medicinal plants referred to are not only the so-called traditional medicinal plants used for prevention and treatment of human diseases, but also the plant resources used as nutrients, hobby

materials, spices, coloring additives, pesticides and veterinary drugs and so on. The whole or parts of the medicinal plants can be used directly in treatment or as raw material in the pharmaceutical industry.

China is one of the countries with abundant resources of medicinal plants, and with the long history of use and cultivation. The discovery of medicinal plants was

Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist 126(4)

In response to the review of *Contributions to the History of Herpetology*. CFN 126(3): 344-345, the book's editor Kraig Adler pointed out (personal communication to FRC 12 May 2013): "Only one small correction. Mrs. Martof used a kitchen knife, not a gun. She told the police she slipped while cutting some pizza. But Bernie was stabbed up under his rib cage several times!"

Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist

It has come to our attention that sections of many of the book reviews by Li Dezhi and Qin Aili were copied from sources without attribution. The journal and the authors apologize for this oversight.