

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor's Note: The Canadian Field-Naturalist is a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing papers on ecology, behaviour, taxonomy, conservation, and other topics relevant to Canadian natural history. In line with this mandate, we review books with a Canadian connection, including those on any species (native or non-native) that inhabits Canada, as well as books covering topics of global relevance, including climate change, biodiversity, species extinction, habitat loss, evolution, and field research experiences.

Currency Codes: CAD Canadian Dollars, USD United States Dollars, EUR Euros, AUD Australian Dollars, GBP British Pounds.

BOTANY

A Field Guide to Urban Plants: Common Species of Pavements, Walls & Waste Ground

By Alexandra-Maria Klein and Julia Krohmer. Translated by Iain Macmillan. 2025. Pelagic Publishing. 144 pages and 193 colour illustrations, 47.00 CAD, Paper. Also available as an E-book.

I beheld a 'weed'

But when its name
was revealed

True beauty I saw.
(Japanese haiku, loosely translated by the authors; p. 8)

This field guide was produced in German as an account of common plants found in urban spaces in Germany. It was translated into English, and additional species accounts were inserted by David Hawkins

to make it more useful for naturalists in the United Kingdom, where this edition was published. It is small, both in dimensions (12.7 cm × 19 cm) and number of pages (144), and illustrates only 90 species out of the many hundreds that might be found in urban situations in Europe. However, it is very attractively produced with many touches that I appreciate, such as annotations on the photographs that indicate important points for identification. Cute and informative subtitles are given below each species' name, such as, Lifts the Spirits in More Ways than One (for Perforate St. John's-wort) and Delightful Ornamental or Annoying Thug (for Hedge Bindweed).

Despite having originated as a German publica-



tion on plants in Germany, many of the species described are so cosmopolitan that the book could be perfectly useful to an urban botanist in Ottawa, where practically all the ruderal plants that thrive downtown originated in the Old World. I presume that this would be true elsewhere in eastern Canada. There is a very brief Foreword and a very brief Preface, followed by an almost equally brief Introduction (six pages) consisting of a section on the total lack of awareness of plants among most inhabitants of European cities and another section on the contribution that urban ruderals make to local biodiversity. The remainder of the book is devoted to individual species accounts. Each account is one to three pages and includes a header photograph of the whole plant in flower and up to three other illustrations, some of which are excellent colour paintings by Roland Spohn. Formal descriptions (growth form, height, flowering period, etc.) are given in small type at the bottom of the first page of each account. The main text is devoted to less formal information, including the origins of the species name, medicinal and other traditional uses, peculiarities of the ecology and the species, and its role in local ecosystems, including which insects find it attractive.

Altogether, I found this a very delightful and informative book. It is the sort of book that I like to have on my shelf and one that I would wish to write myself, had it not already manifested in material form. Strictly as an aid to identifying urban plants in eastern

Canada, it is probably not ideal: one of the many illustrated guides to Ontario or Quebec flowers would probably work as well or better, but as an introduction

to the general topic of urban plants for non-botanists I highly recommend it.

TONY GASTON
Ottawa, ON, Canada

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