



4-29-1996

***Wild plants of the Pueblo Province. Exploring ancient and enduring uses.* by William W. Dunmire and Gail D. Tierney**

Renée Van Buren
Brigham Young University

Kimberly Hamblin Hart
Brigham Young University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/gbn>

Recommended Citation

Van Buren, Renée and Hart, Kimberly Hamblin (1996) "*Wild plants of the Pueblo Province. Exploring ancient and enduring uses.* by William W. Dunmire and Gail D. Tierney," *Great Basin Naturalist*. Vol. 56 : No. 2 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/gbn/vol56/iss2/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Western North American Naturalist Publications at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Basin Naturalist by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

BOOK REVIEW

Wild Plants of the Pueblo Province. Exploring Ancient and Enduring Uses. William W. Dunmire and Gail D. Tierney. Foreword by Gary Paul Nabhan. Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, NM. 1995. 290 pp. \$19.95, softback.

This book immediately appears field worthy and feels good in the hands. And that's simply judging the book by its cover! Once opened there is much to praise about this text. The authors have succeeded in putting together a wonderfully interesting and well-written field guide for the lay person as well as a useful reference for serious students and professionals interested in ethnobotany of the Southwest. Within 9 chapters of text, an illustrated section involving about 73 plants, and an extensive chart summarizing plant uses, the reader learns of the ecology, representative flora, ethnobotany, and cultural history of the Pueblo Province. The original intent of the book was to provide a guide to commonly seen plants of Bandelier National Monument and the Pajarito Plateau in central New Mexico, and a discussion of the plants' prehistoric and recent uses. The authors have surpassed this goal.

The 9 chapters reveal a cohesive and interesting history of the people, plants, and land itself. Ample information provides the reader insight as to how these elements interact and what the consequences of those interactions have been and continue to be. It is easy not only to move through the spatial and geographical regions, but to enjoy a voyage in time as well and feel as if you were there. Line drawings, photographs, and maps lend additional interest to the text. Although there is a great deal of information given about vegetative zones, human history, and other topics, the authors have retained the importance of plants by referencing particular species wherever appropriate. The chapter on indicator species is particularly interesting and useful. This is a subject that few field guides address,

and yet it is so easily applied and can be observed in the field when adequate information is provided. The main focus of the text is the center section that includes photographs and descriptions of 73 plants. Line drawings accompany each plant treated. The technical descriptions are somewhat brief, but the illustrations provide enough detail that field identification can be made easily in most cases. Perhaps one of the most valuable sections is the annotated plant list included at the end of the book. In an easy-to-read format, a great deal of information is concisely summarized for over 300 plants. The chart is subdivided into 7 general categories of plant use (i.e., food and beverage, medicine, construction, etc.), with information given on how each plant is used by specific pueblos. The chart is well referenced and includes original citations for every use.

A brief, yet well-organized analysis of the changes in plant utilization that occurred with the Spanish colonization in the Southwest is provided in chapter 3. The authors take a very complex history and present it in the context of plant ecology. It provides an informative view of the ecological consequences of the collision of cultures. Contemporary culture, plant use, and ecological modification are also included in this text. Two chapters provide insightful information on current cultural and ecological issues. Throughout the text, and reflected in the annotated plant list as well, the authors have attempted to treat religious and ceremonial plant uses with appropriate respect. An added benefit of the book is the authors' personal association with individuals in different Pueblo tribes. Their sense of respect and honor for these cultures is felt throughout the book.

Our only complaint relating to this text is the lack of references citing specific information. It is quite difficult to identify references for much of the information included within the text, with the exception of the chapter discussing indicator species. A bibliography with

145 references is included at the end of the book, but it is difficult to relate these references to particular chapters and specific information. This omission weakens the usefulness of the book as a reference for serious students. It may be that the authors consciously omitted citations in an effort to allow the text to flow more easily, but it is a constant frustration when one is interested in identifying sources. A list of suggested reading is included at the end of each chapter, but no reference is given to original sources that support specific facts. In the preface, the authors do mention many sources that contribute in a general way.

Overall, this book is one that should be included in a field book box, on the bookcase

as a reference for plants and their uses by cultures of the Southwest, and in a travel file as it gives suggestions for specific hikes located in the Pueblo Province. For anyone interested in plant ecology, taxonomy, ethnobotany, cultural anthropology, or simply those with a general love for the Southwest, this book is highly recommended. It is well written, informative, and aesthetically delightful.

Renée Van Buren
Kimberly Hamblin Hart
Department of Botany and Range Science
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602