

BOOK REVIEW: THE PINEAPPLE: BOTANY, PRODUCTION AND USES

The pineapple is the most famous, and economically important, member of the bromeliad family. *The Pineapple: Botany, Production and Uses*, edited by D.P. Bartholomew, R.E. Powell and K.G. Rohrbach, covers all aspects of the pineapple. It was published by CABI Publishing in 2003.

Perhaps the most interesting chapters of this 300 page book for the bromeliad grower are the first two. They cover:

- The pineapple's origin, cultivation history and current production areas,
- Its morphology, anatomy and taxonomy.

Other chapters cover all aspects of the pineapple's horticulture, harvest and processing. The information on the pineapple's disease control and nutrition strategies can be used to infer approaches to these matters for bromeliads more generally. However, the information in Dr. Benzing's book: *Bromeliaceae – Profile of an Adaptive Radiation*, may be of more value in this regard.

In the book's first chapter, the point is made that the pineapple has been "domesticated" by the Amerindians thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans in 1493. The Amerindians used the pineapple for a range of uses, including: as a fresh fruit, alcoholic beverages, fibre production, a variety of medicinal purposes, and poisoning arrowheads. One curious fact is that while pineapple production in European glasshouses expanded during the 18th and 19th centuries, it then went into decline after that due to the lower cost of shipping the plant, with the fruit attached, to Europe from America! Annual world production is about 14,000,000 tonnes.

In the second chapter, there is a detailed discussion of the pineapple's morphology, followed by a taxonomic revision of the *Ananas* and *Pseudananas* genera. The species *Pseudananas saganarius* becomes *Ananas macrodontes*, while the *Ananas* species, *ananassoides*, *nanas*, *lucidus*, *paraguazensis*, *cosmos*, *bracteatus*, and *fritzmuelleri* are downgraded to the level of five varieties of *A. cosmos*. (The former species, *A. monstrous* is regarded as an invalid name). It remains to be seen whether all other botanists will support the proposed changes.

The first two chapters of the book are worth reading by anyone with an interest in pineapples. If you would like to grow a pineapple in your backyard, then the other chapters of this book are worth at least a quick "once over".

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