

# Book reviews

Here we present recently published books that might be relevant for grassland scientists and conservationists, both specific grassland titles as well as faunas, floras, or general books on ecology and conservation biology. If you (as an author, editor or publisher) would like to propose a certain title for review, or if you (as an EDGG member) would like to write a review (or reviews in general), please contact the Book Review Editor ([dengler@botanik.uni-hamburg.de](mailto:dengler@botanik.uni-hamburg.de)).

**Frey, W. (2009) [Ed.]: Syllabus of Plant Families – Adolf Engler’s Syllabus der Pflanzenfamilien. Part 3: Bryophytes and seedless Vascular Plants. 13th ed., IX + 419 pp., Borntraeger, Berlin. Price: 89,00 € (hardcover). ISBN 978-3-443-01063-9**

Half a century ago, the 12th edition of Adolf Engler’s well-known “Syllabus der Pflanzenfamilien” was published in two volumes, like all previous editions, still in German. At that time, this was a kind of global standard for plant taxonomy in general. It subsequently became almost forgotten, while during the past 20 years mainly molecular-genetic methods have dramatically reshaped our vision of the relationships between the living species of the globe. Nobody else seriously attempted such a comprehensive and consistent treatment as Engler’s across all groups traditionally covered by botanists (i.e. including algae, fungi and even cyanobacteria), while there are various such volumes or series for angiosperms or vascular plants.

With this in mind, the restart of a 13th edition of the Syllabus after such a long time is highly appreciated. Now in English and planned for five volumes, the editor and publisher at the same time stick to the traditional and convincing concept of a series that was founded more than a century ago (1st ed. 1892) but incorporate the newest knowledge from genetic, morphological and biochemical research. Every family and higher taxon is presented in a standardised way, accompanied with many black-and-white drawings and microphotographs. Within the families, all extant and fossil genera are listed, each with the number of currently known species given.

The first volume of the 13th edition to appear has been written by W. Frey, M. Stech and E. Fischer, and comprises the traditional phyla *Bryophyta* (bryophytes) and *Pteridophyta* (fern and fern-allies). However, already the Introduction and the first chapter on the “Subkingdom *Embryobionta*” make clear that neither of these two “taxa” is monophyletic, while indeed together with the *Spermatophyta* (seed plants), they form a strongly supported phylogenetic group, from which first the *Marchantiophyta*, then the *Bryophyta* s.str. branched off, while the

*Anthcerotophyta* (hornworts) are actually the sister clade of all vascular plants. The novelties continue in the lower ranks and are translated into a proper taxonomic classification, supported throughout by extensive and up-to-date reference lists. It is to be hoped that also the other four volumes will appear in the near future!

Jürgen Dengler, Bayreuth, Germany  
[juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:juergen.dengler@uni-bayreuth.de)

Wolfgang Frey (Editor)

## Syllabus of Plant Families

13<sup>th</sup> ed.

A. Engler’s Syllabus der Pflanzenfamilien

### 3 Bryophytes and seedless Vascular Plants

