**Book Reviews**  
**Daniel F. Austin, Book Review Editor**


Tony Cunningham’s extraordinarily rich and varied volume on ethnobotany in the *People and Plants* series is undoubtedly one of the best recent texts on the subject. Tony has dedicated his career to conservation and sustainable management of “wild” plant resources and so the applied orientation of his book is consistent, as is the application of ethnobotany to these goals. Even so, *Applied Ethnobotany* offers much more than application. Basic ethnobotanical tools are offered in hypothesis generation, field taxonomy, sampling and inventory, life forms, population biology and ecology, landscape ecology and marketing. Cunningham pulls together diverse literatures from basic ethnobotany, ecology, and economics, and marries it successfully with the literatures of conservation, and sustainable development. It is a text appropriate for both basic and applied ethnobotany. It loses none of its potency for this juxtaposition and melding, but don’t be misled about the extended function of this extraordinarily useful and well-written book. To quote Tony himself in another context, we need to defend against “the false dichotomy between applied and theoretical aspects of ethnobiological research” (EWG in press).

*Applied Ethnobotany* is oriented toward conservation through ethnobotany. The book begins with Tony’s emphasis on “1 Conservation and context,” and then follows immediately with basic methodology “2 Local inventories” and with marketing “3 Settlement, commercialization, and change.” The mid-section of the book is dedicated to more basic methods: mensuration “4 Measuring individual plants and assessing harvesting impacts”; population biology “5 Opportunities and constraints on sustainable harvest”; and “6 Landscapes and ecosystems.” The final sections return to Tony’s orientation “7 Conservation” and “8 Striving for balance,” a discussion of the global-local duality and complimentarity. Figures and boxes, which make reading easy, details rich and facts well documented, enhance these chapters. Citations are numerous and well employed.

Tony’s broad background in ecology and evolutionary biology is evident in the diversity and rigor of methods he employs in ethnobotany. Not only does he appreciate the intricacies of matrix modeling and landscape ecology, but also he clearly relays their relevance to ethnobotany, conservation, and sustainable development. As a proponent of ecological ethnobotany, I often refer students to this text as an introduction to the approach. Tony’s own emphasis however is on the impact of harvesting of wild plants by people. The late Darrel Posey used to call “wild” that four-letter “W” word. In his introduction, Tony discusses this issue saying, “Wild and domesticated species are at opposite ends of a continuum.” Nonetheless, he seldom addresses that continuum or its implications to conservation and natural resource management. I think this is a missed opportunity to explore many complex interactions between plants and people; by using the “W” word, we immediately slip into the comfortable mold of seeing these plants as other and not as integral with us; these are not wild plants to be conserved but an interactive process between people and plants to be valued. But hey, small stuff compared to Cunningham’s greater view of applied and theoretical aspects of ethnobotanical research.

In summary, Cunningham stresses issues of both cultural and biological diversity. This book is intended as a practical guide to approaches and field methods for participatory work between local people and field researchers. In particular, it is aimed at African students or professionals working in conservation, rural development or as national park managers who have to make resource management decisions. However, *Applied Ethnobotany* has much wider relevance.

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It is not an exaggeration to say that Al Gentry (1945–1993) was one of the greatest botanists of his time. Initially, Gentry was known as a student of the Bignoniaceae. However, his interests went beyond the taxonomy of a single plant family. Gentry became interested in understanding why some forests were more diverse than others and how floristic composition varied from place to place. To answer this question, he developed the 0.1-hectare transect sampling method that could be applied to multiple sites in a consistent
Many of those plants are in this book, which lists over 200 plants growing in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan that have been used in traditional medicine in the region, and are indicated by more recent scientific research to be of medicinal interest. In the preface plants documented in this book are... CONTINUE READING. View on Springer.