Features

Taxonomic treatment. Taxonomic treatments generally follow recent monographic and revisionary work, but an effort is made to provide a certain rough consistency of “splitting” vs. “lumping” across different taxonomic groups. As is generally true in recent treatments, generic and family concepts are often narrower than those used in the “RAB Manual”, based on new evidence, including (but not limited to) cladistic methods applied to morphologic and molecular data. Ironically, these results have often resulted in a validation of earlier, narrower generic (and familial) concepts espoused by Small, Rydberg, and others. Varieties are less frequently recognized than by Feri, though a considerable number of species and infraspecific taxa “lumped” by RAB are recognized (generally following more recent monographic or revisionary work). Some taxa not formally recognized are discussed and characters for their recognition provided.

Detailed keys. Keys are subjected to rigorous testing in the field and herbarium, by hundreds of users. To the degree feasible, keys are structured to emphasize characters that are readily observable and available for long parts of the year, such as vegetative characters (of course, this is not possible for all groups). Multiple characters are provided. Terminology strives to avoid abstruse technical terms which do not significantly add meaning (for some genera, an introduction to morphological characters and terms used is provided as “identification notes” preceding the key). Geographic distributions and habitats are sometimes included in the keys as pragmatic, useful, secondary “characters,” but are placed in brackets to indicate that they are not “true” characters. The keys include all species from the primary flora area (North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia), as well as all species occurring in a broader secondary area. The inclusion in the keys of taxa from the broader, secondary area will facilitate the discovery of range extensions, as well as extending the usefulness of the Flora to a broader geographic area. In some cases, several alternate keys are provided. The primary emphasis of the keys is pragmatism -- effective and efficient identification. For this reason, a key to a genus sometimes includes closely similar taxa not in the genus that may be mistaken for it. Another example is that the “family key” to ferns and fern allies is actually a key to genera, allowing an emphasis in the key on readily observable characteristics, rather than the technical characters often needed to distinguish fern families. Keys are based on herbarium specimens, though reference is made when live characters may differ from those of pressed specimens. Some keys have been adapted from literature cited; where the adaptation is particularly close, credit is given to the source by specific citation. All keys should be regarded as “draft”; many will be substantially altered prior to publication, based on additional field and herbarium testing.

Habitat. Information is provided about the habitat of the taxon. Especially for more localized, specialized, or rare taxa, the habitat is described in considerable detail. Supplemental habitat information for GA rare species is taken from online information posted by the Georgia Natural Heritage Program.

Native status. The native or alien status is stated. If there is a question, that is mentioned or discussed. For aliens, an opinion is given as to whether the taxon is naturalized, persistent, waif, etc. in the primary flora area.

Flowering/fruiting dates. Flowering and fruiting dates are provided for the primary flora area, in a format similar to the Manual. These are derived from herbarium specimens viewed by the author (collected from within the Flora area), from field observations by the author (within the Flora area), and from literature cited.

Distribution of species. A statement of the range-wide distribution of each taxon treated is provided. This is based on published distribution maps and distribution statements in other floras, amended and improved by additional herbarium specimens and published records (such as the “Noteworthy Collections” section in Castanea). The distribution within the primary area is provided by state and physiographic province.

Literature. Nearly all genera have citations to recent, pertinent systematic literature, as well as more limited citations to literature on ecology and population biology. The intent is to provide the user with access into more detailed literature, and to document the literature basis of the treatment followed in the Flora. So far, about 1500 references are cited, and more will be added prior to publication.

Synonymy. Cited synonymy is provided to regional floras, monographs, revisions, and other significant floristic treatments. This allows comparison of the treatment in the Flora to other treatments, and convenient access to the other treatments. Synonymy is provided comprehensively for the following floras: Radford, Ahles, & Bell (1968); Small (1933); Feri (1950); Gleason and Cronquist 1st edition (1952); Godfrey & Wooten (1979, 1981); Vascular Flora of the Southeastern States (Cronquist 1980, Isely 1990); Wofford (1989); Gleason and Cronquist 2nd edition (1991); Kartesz (1999); and Flora of North America (1993, 1997, 2000). Also, cited synonymy is provided for some families to other important and influential works, such as Hitchcock & Chase for grasses, Correll for orchids, Luer for orchids, Mackenzie for Carex, Wilbur for legumes (1961), etc. Synonymy used in recent monographs and revisions is also cited. All names attributed to the Flora area in other floras, monographs, and revisions are accounted for.

Rarity. Species monitored as rare, threatened, or endangered by the state agencies of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, or by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are so indicated. While the details of rarity status will change, this will still provide the user a preliminary indication that the taxon is one of conservation concern.

Comments and discussion. Miscellaneous comments and discussion are provided for many species and genera, including discussion of biogeography, more details on distribution of rare species, additional notes on identification not included in the keys, information of particular interest on species biology and ecology, habitat, uses, discovery in the flora area or a state, etc. These “idiosyncracic comments” (as they have been called) add to the general usefulness and interest of what is intended to be a rigorous, practical, and interesting flora.