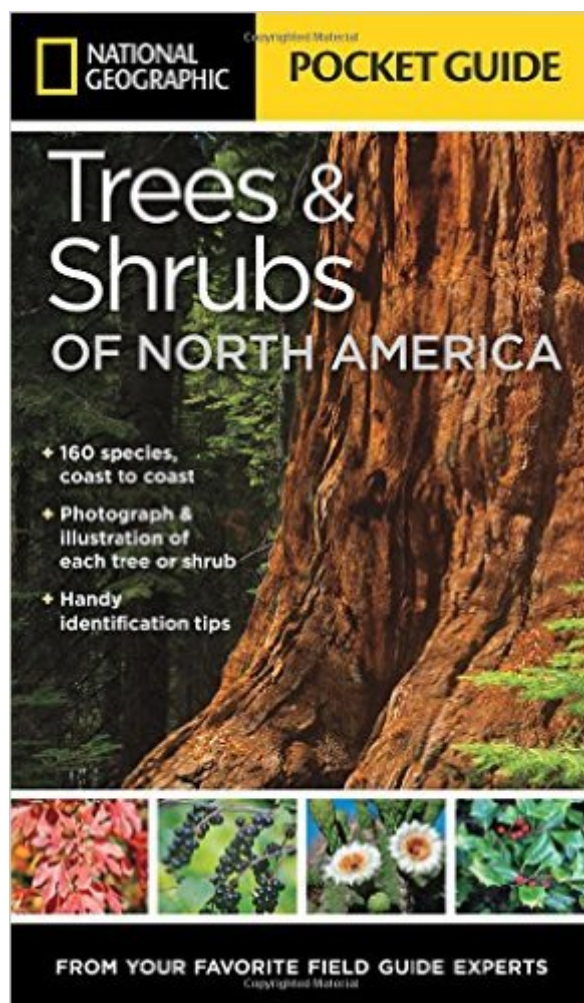


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National Geographic Pocket Guide To Trees And Shrubs Of North America



Synopsis

This basic beginner's field guide to the larger plants in North America is part of the growing National Geographic Pocket Guide series. Spot-on descriptive information and key facts about trees and shrubs are conveyed in a handy, colorful, easy-to-reference volume. More robust than any other beginning field guides on the market, this book includes selected photography and newly commissioned art and graphics to help identify each species of tree. Handy, authoritative, and easy to read, this pocket guides are useful in the field or as an in-home reference for beginners, nature lovers, and tree-climbers everywhere.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an interesting little field guide for general application. Entries are organized by gymnosperms (conifers), angiosperms-monocots (palms) and angiosperms-dicots (everything else). The book is only 175 slim pages and covers the entire United States. Obviously many species are omitted, yet, the major trees are covered. It is an odd mix. It includes Virginia Roundleaf Birch (*Betula uber*), a critically endangered tree endemic to one county in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Obviously, you are unlikely to ever encounter this tree, questioning it's inclusion in the guide. An explanation might be that the author, Bland Crowder, was the editor of "Flora of Virginia," a tome published in 2012 that describes 3,164 plant species or lower taxa in nearly 200 families, accompanied by 1,400 original, captioned, scaled, and botanically accurate illustrations. Photos are good and entries have drawings of leaves and seeds. Although the text for each entry is only about a paragraph, Crowder

gives you interesting facts such as historical description, economic and medicinal value. This field guide serves as a handy, portable very general reference at a reasonable price.

I was hoping that this book would have some value as a book, and not just as a field guide reference. That is, that there would be some introductory material that would, in a systematically organized way, present some general information about trees, the classifications they fall into, and how to identify them. Or to put it another way, I was hoping that the writers of this book would realize that we live in a time when there are any number of websites and mobile-device apps that can fulfill the function of helping one to identify a given tree. It's the well-organized, more generally educational material that websites and apps can't provide as well as a book might. Unfortunately, this book fails at that educational task. It has very little general information in it before it dives into the field guide section. This information consists of a few paragraphs on the nature of woody plants, then a very brief and rather unclear discussion of the distinction between gymnosperms and the two types of angiosperms, and finally a two-page illustration showing some terms for the different types of leaves. Further, the guide section isn't very good either. There's no apparent structure to the book beyond sections devoted to gymnosperms, dicot angiosperms, and monocot angiosperms. Beyond that, and assuming you -- perhaps with the scanty help of the introduction -- know enough to narrow a tree down to one of those three groups, you're apparently just supposed to flip through the appropriate section of the book until you stumble across a picture that looks something like the tree you're trying to identify. In the descriptions of the individual trees, many terms are used that aren't commonly known and aren't defined in the book: "twice compound" leaves, the "sinuses" of a leaf, and "unisexual clusters" of flowers to give just a few examples. As noted above, the task of identifying a tree is something that can be straightforwardly done with the various websites or apps designed for that purpose. Far more so than with this book, since those electronic resources can walk you through a narrowing-down process based on leaf shape or other characteristic. Speaking of apps in particular, these can usually function without internet access, and can be contained within a smartphone that's more pocketable than any book, while nonetheless carrying far more information than the 160 trees given one-page mention in this book. So bottom line, I really think this book is almost useless. For simple field-guide identification of trees and shrubs, get an app. For general information about trees and shrubs, get a non-field-guide book.

I consider myself a bit of a tree and shrub fanatic. I just love to plant them and watch them grow. I love to learn about the varieties, their habitat and growth habits. One of my favorite things to do is to

browse garden nurseries and read data tags on trees and shrubs. I often wish I could dig up little specimens and bring them home. I liken it to people who want to pick up every dog or cat they come across. I love pets too, but they take lots of time, \$, commitment and responsibility. I had high hopes for this book. I have the NG pocket guides for Rocks and Minerals as well as Flowers. I thought this guide lacked in classic info and details. What it does include is (160 species of trees and shrubs) the common name as well as the species name, height range, info about leaves, flowers/fruits/seeds and range. There are small color photos of each tree/shrub and smaller illustrations of the leaves, fruit, cone, catkins, flowers... There is a small paragraph which provides some topical info that one may not widely be aware of (like historical pearls of wisdom), which can be interesting. I would prefer that it provide much more descriptive information in more of a bullet point format that included sun and water needs, growth rate, most desirable habitat, shape, wildlife draws and disease problems, weather tolerance/susceptibility. This is a small book (a true pocket size) with selective information and coverage. Not bad, but I just wish it had more.

This is a thorough "pocket guide" to trees and shrubs. The author writes that it is "meant to whet readers' interest and to truly help them identify trees and shrubs that they may see on field trips and travels, and to tell them something about the species' ecology, value to wildlife and humans, and status--including whether or not they are native." So it is an introduction to the plant rather than exhaustive. The summary paragraph on a particular tree or shrub may or may not provide the information that you want. Each page includes the history of the plant, its range, fruits or flowers and colored pictures of close ups of its leaves or fruit. The author seems to enjoy sharing some trivia about each selection that is interesting more or less. The guide is organized by name of the plant within four sections of types of trees and shrubs. The glossy photographs of each species is about as good as you can imagine in a book that can indeed fit in your back pocket. This is a good place to start to learn more about trees and shrubs in N. America. The author demonstrates a passionate enthusiasm for his subject and a sincere desire that his interest becomes contagious to readers.

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