Book Review

(Edited by B. M. Spooner)

R. J. Murphy. *Fumitories of Britain and Ireland*. BSBI Handbook No. 12. Pp. vi + 121, line drawings, colour and black & white photographs, distribution map. UK: Botanical Society of the British Isles, 2009. Available from: Summerfield Books, 3 Phoenix Park, Skelton, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9SD, UK; e-mail: info@summerfieldbooks.com; website: <http://www.summerfieldbooks.com/bsbi-publications.asp>. Price £12.50 (plus postage & packing). ISBN 978 0 901158 40 6 (softback).

Rosaline J. Murphy's book on the genus *Fumaria* gives a detailed account of the 10 species found in Britain and Ireland. Each species account includes the botanical and common English name, a detailed description (with size and measurements of the floral parts) of the species (and subspecific taxa if any), chromosome number, and the distribution and habitat. Intraspecific taxa are listed after the species descriptions, but not keyed out there; these are keyed out in the main key with the species: Key B. Each species is illustrated with a line drawing showing its habit, and whole and dissected floral parts, plates (in colour and black & white) showing various characters such as inflorescence, leaf, fruit and sometimes habitat, and a distribution map with increasing dot sizes for the more recent records.

The book is well planned and detailed enough, with illustrations and maps, to cover the species for identification purposes. The descriptions have a good format that is constant throughout the book. A small glossary at the end covers all technical words used in the descriptions. Included also in the book are descriptions and observations on two taxa termed as 'casuals', one that has not been recorded for more than 50 years, and the other where only a single plant has been found in Britain. Included also are notes on four hybrids.

The book fulfils its purpose as an identification guide for fumitories of Britain and Ireland. However, for a book that is mainly taxonomic, a few additions (or perhaps stronger editing) would have made it more complete.

Firstly, I find giving two keys (one more detailed than the other to include the subspecific taxa) a little confusing — especially as both are on floral and fruit characters. If the author accepts the varieties and forms below the species level, the detailed key, or the subspecific taxa keyed out under species, would be more appropriate. Also in the key itself, the keyed-out species should be numbered so as to make it easy for the reader to get to the species, especially when these are not treated alphabetically in the book.

The descriptions lack a general size for the plant, and the leaf. Both would make the description complete and would add value in identification. For the taxa, the original citation is not given. Though this is of no value for identification, it helps us to know when the species was first described, and would give some information on, for example, when the subspecific taxa were validly recognised. The line illustrations lack magnifications or bar scales, as do the photos of leaf, fruits and inflorescences. Even though sizes are given in the descriptions, a scale to the drawing adds much value to it, and is easier to use.

All in all, the book is well produced and adequate for its intended purpose, i.e. identification of the fumitories of Britain and Ireland. I congratulate the author on her hard work in the field and herbaria, in putting together a useful guide that will make the identification of this very special and rather difficult group of plants a little easier and more interesting.

Shahina A. Ghazanfar