

## CBHL Announces 2024 Annual Literature Award Winners

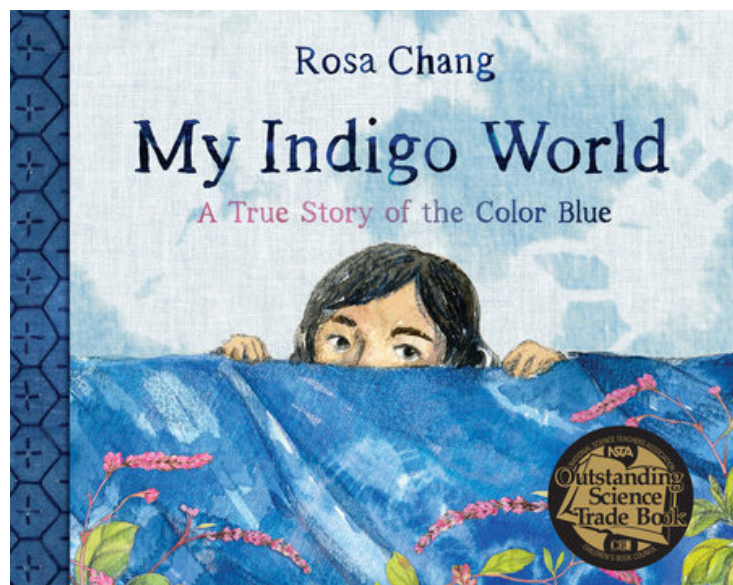
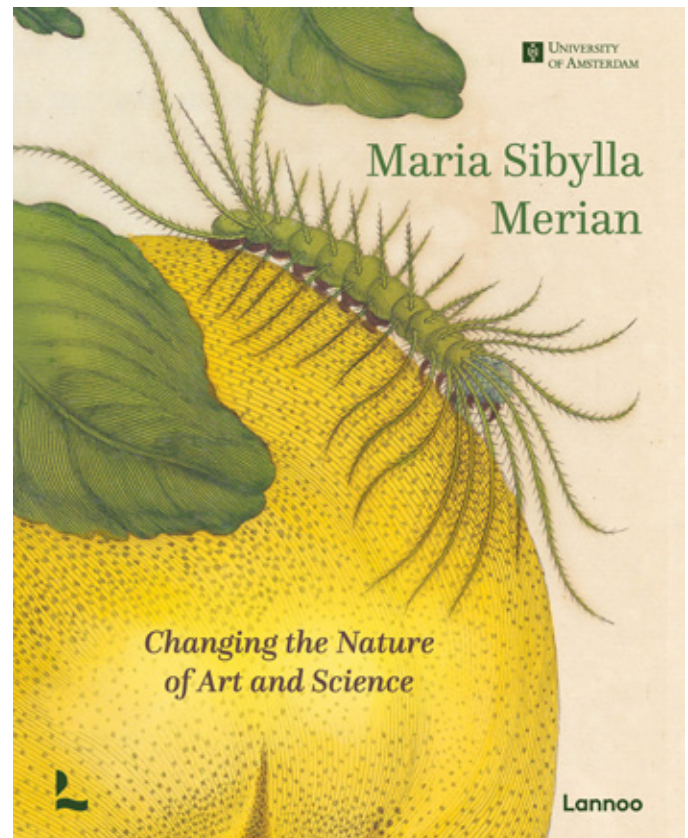
### Annual Literature Award

*for a work that makes a significant contribution  
to the literature of botany or horticulture*

*Maria Sibylla Merian: Changing the nature of art and  
science.*

Edited by Bert van de Roemer, Florence Pieters, Hans  
Mulder, Kay Etheridge, and Marieke van Delft.

Lannoo, 2022. 304 p : illustrations (some color).  
ISBN 9789401485333.



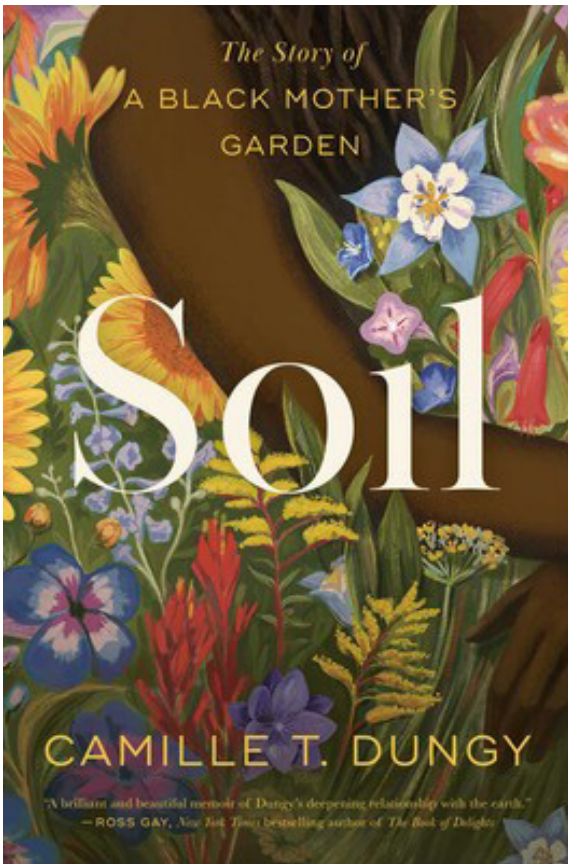
### Award of Excellence for Literature for Children

*My indigo world : a true story of the color blue.*  
By Rosa Chang.

minedition, 2023. n.p. (40 p.): color illustrations.  
ISBN 9781662650659.

## In This Issue

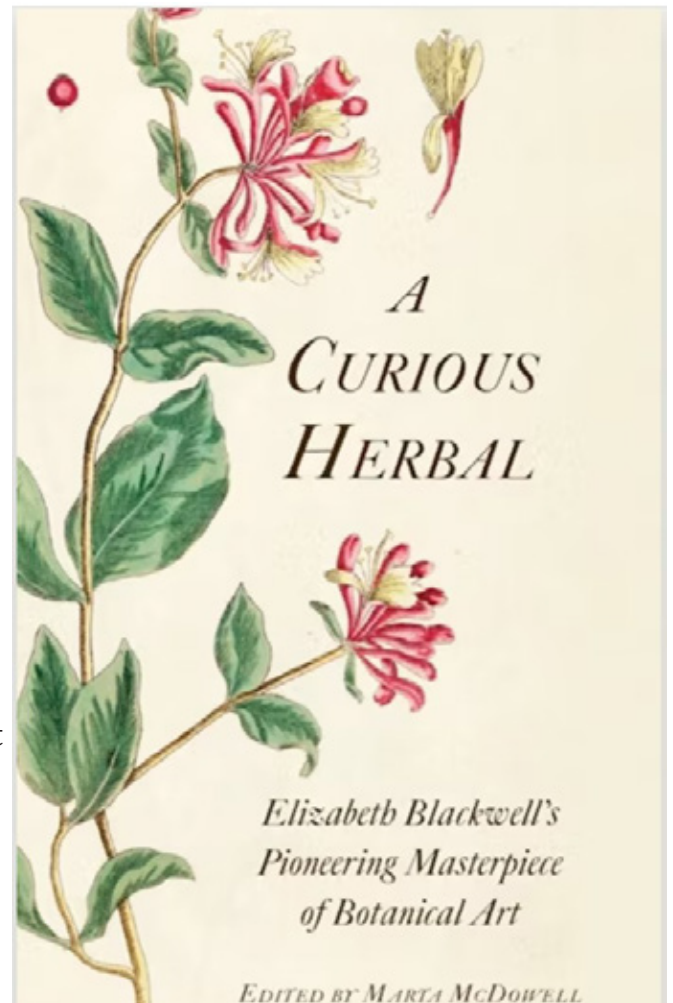
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## Award of Excellence for Garden and Nature Writing

*Soil: The story of a Black mother's garden.*  
By Camille T. Dungy.

Simon & Schuster, 2023. 336 p.  
ISBN 9781982195304.



## Award of Excellence in History

*A curious herbal: Elizabeth Blackwell's pioneering masterpiece of botanical art.*

By Elizabeth Blackwell, ed. by Marta McDowell, and Janet Stiles Tyson, essayist.

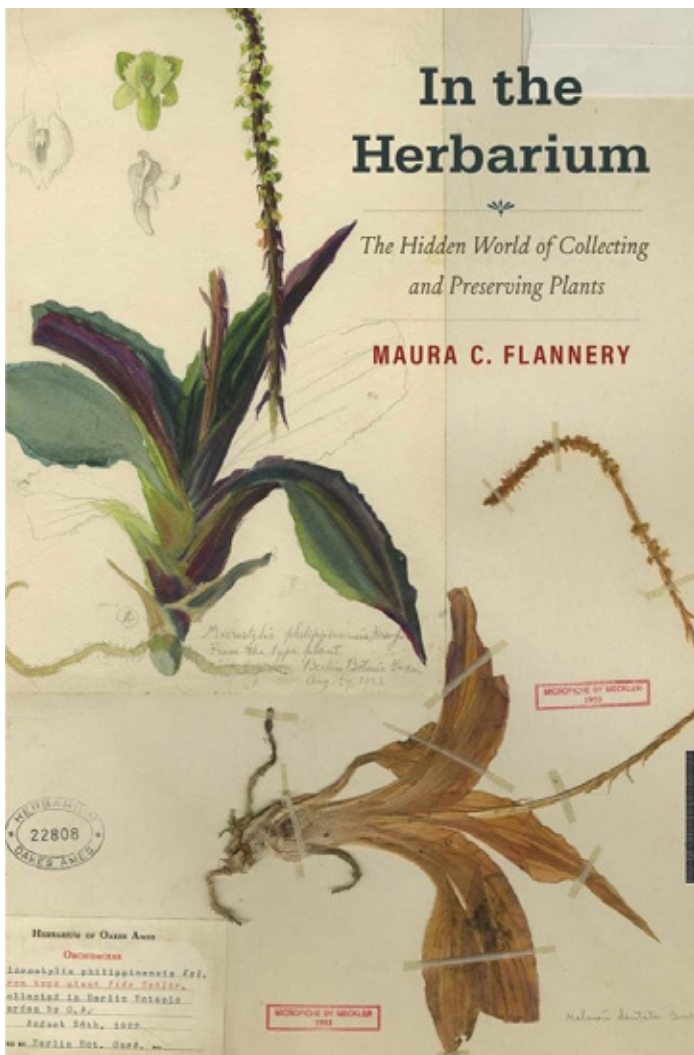
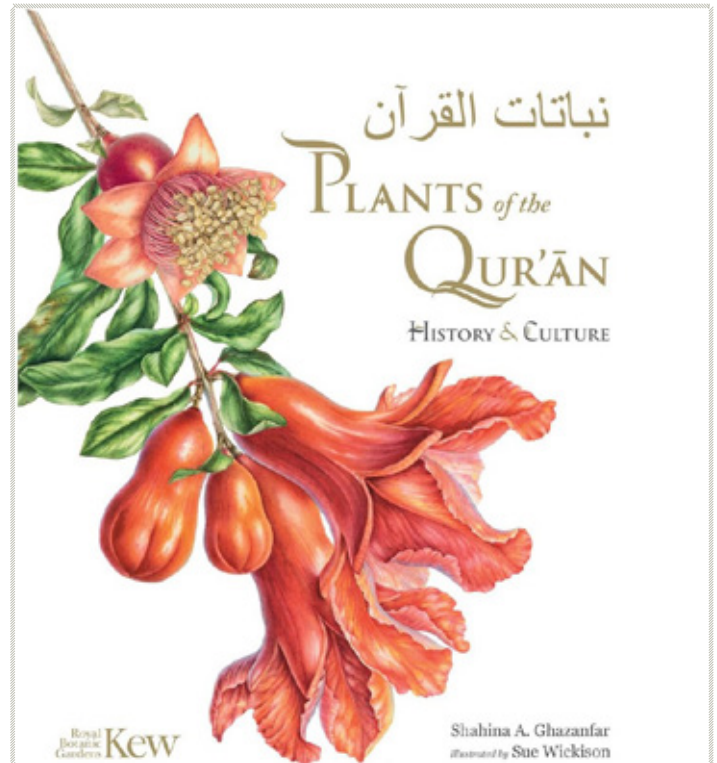
Abbeville Press Publishers, 2023. 576 p.: illustrations (colour).  
ISBN 9780789214539.



## Award of Excellence for Botanical Art and Illustration

*Plants of the Qur'an: History & culture.*  
By Shahina Ghazanfar and Sue Wickison.

Kew Publishing, 2023. 208 p.  
ISBN 9781842467176.



## Award of Excellence for Botany

*In the herbarium: The hidden world of collecting and preserving plants.*  
By Maura C. Flannery.

Yale University Press, 2023. 336 p.  
ISBN 9780300247916.



# Calendar of Upcoming Events

Edited by Rita M. Hassert  
Library Collections Manager  
Sterling Morton Library  
The Morton Arboretum



June 15-19, 2024  
Botany 2024  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
<http://botany.org>

June 24-27, 2024  
American Public Garden Association  
2024 Conference  
Boston, Massachusetts  
<http://www.publicgardens.org>

June 27-July 2, 2024  
American Library Association (ALA)  
Annual Meeting  
San Diego, California  
<https://2024.alaannual.org/>

August 15-17, 2024  
Society of American Archivists (SAA)  
88th Annual Meeting  
Chicago, Illinois  
<http://www.archivists.org>

August 26-30, 2024  
GardenComm Conference  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
<https://gardencomm.org/>

October 6-9, 2024  
American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)  
Conference on Landscape Architecture  
Washington, DC  
<https://www.asla.org/annualmeetingandexpo.aspx>

October 8-10, 2024  
Visual Resources Association (VRA)  
Annual Conference  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
<http://vraweb.org>

October 17-19, 2024  
American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA)  
30th Annual Meeting & Conference  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
<https://asba-art.org/>

October 18-19, 2024  
American Horticultural Therapy Association  
Annual Conference  
Raleigh, North Carolina  
<http://www.ahta.org>

November 11-15, 2024-in-person  
December 9-13, 2024-online  
Charleston Conference  
Charleston, South Carolina  
<https://www.charleston-hub.com/the-charleston-conference>





# CBHL Members' East News

Edited by Shelly Kilroy  
Librarian, Peter M. Wege Library  
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

## CBHL Vice President On the Road

Kristen Mastel  
Head Librarian and Curator  
Andersen Horticultural Library  
University of Minnesota Arboretum

This past spring I was fortunate enough to visit two fellow CBHL libraries and meet up with our colleagues. First up on my trip was seeing Robin Everly at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. I was in Washington D.C. to advocate for the National Kidney Foundation. Little known fact is I am a kidney donor to my husband through paired exchange. I was fortunate enough to get a full tour of the Botany



*Robin Everly and Kristen Mastel in the Botany Library.*



Library and other specialized spaces. One special stop on my day's itinerary was the Cullman Rare Book Library with Leslie Overstreet and Sydney Fitzgibbon. Leslie is an expert on Maria Sibylla Merian, so seeing various editions and the remarkable coloration variation was fascinating. They were even kind enough to share their vertical file on Hough's *The American Woods* with me, as we are looking into a possible exhibit in conjunction with our set; however, I am still on the hunt for the 14th volume to complete our collection. Wrapping up my day, I met with Alice Tangerini, the Smithsonian's full-time botanical illustrator. This was a treat, as we had met during the rare books course I took at Oak Spring. Her light-filled studio is awe-inspiring, and to see her process up close is nothing short of amazing. You can read more about her process and see examples in this [Smithsonian Magazine article](#). Thank you to all the Smithsonian library staff and researchers that said hello and took time out of their busy schedules to make me feel welcome and give me the grand tour. It was a treat to meet you all, and a special shout out to Robin who went above and beyond.

Luckily, the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum is a participant in the AHS Reciprocal Garden Network. This allowed me to visit three gardens while my family vacationed in Phoenix, including Desert Botanical Garden, Boyce Thompson Arboretum, and Tohono Chul in Tucson.





Top left: Beth Brandt and Kristen Mastel at Desert Botanical Garden  
Top right: Boyce Thompson Arboretum  
Bottom: Tohono Chul



Beth Brand and I had a lovely discussion about managing collections, volunteers, and space needs. I will make a special call out to the Boyce Thompson, as I must have hit peak timing to see over 100 Rufous Hummingbirds during my walk. Tohono Chul is a lovely little garden that has a wonderful engaging [children's scavenger hunt](#) that I am squirreling away for an idea.

Visiting other gardens and colleagues is refreshing, rejuvenating, and educational. I appreciate everyone's time and expertise that you share in-person and online. I look forward to seeing those of you who can attend the USAIN/CBHL Conference in-person at Michigan State University. Now, I welcome suggestions on who and where I should visit over the coming year as President?



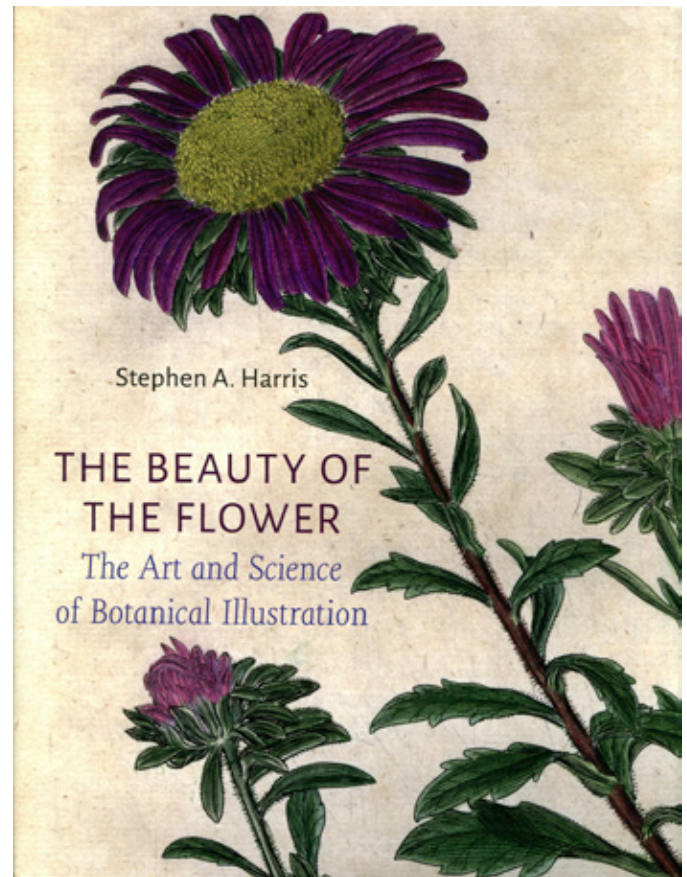


# Book Reviews

Edited by Gillian Hayward  
Library Manager  
Library and Information Services  
Longwood Gardens

Harris, Stephen A. *The Beauty of the Flower: The Art and Science of Botanical Illustration*. London: Reaktion Books, 2023 [U.S. distribution, University of Chicago Press]. 336 pages, color and black and white illustrations. \$45.00. ISBN 978-1-78914-780-3 (hardcover).

Review by Charlotte A. Tancin  
Librarian  
Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation  
Carnegie Mellon University



Flowers have an outsized influence on us. The arresting way they look as we encounter them; their form, color, scent; where they live; their seasonal appearance; their lushness or spareness; how they respond to the sun; how pollinators interact with them; whether they presage the emergence of fruit or vegetables; their strangeness or their comforting familiarity; their life cycles; their evanescence: all of these, and more, affect us. But their beauty is perhaps the prime factor that draws us to them. Pictures of flowers are everywhere, but – intermixed with all of the images created to satisfy us aesthetically and emotionally – there are vast numbers of flower illustrations created primarily to capture and convey scientific information in the service of expanding and sometimes correcting our knowledge. They might also satisfy us in other ways, but science is their main purpose. Those illustrations are the focus of Stephen Harris's *The Beauty of the Flower*.

As Druce Curator of Oxford University Herbaria, Harris has seen many, many historical plant illustrations. This book discusses the history and ongoing creation of flower illustrations and other botanical images as part of the shared scientific dialogue and documentary record of botany (these days, a.k.a. the plant sciences). Harris examines scientific motivations for drawing plant illustrations, and the factors that determine how useful those illustrations are. The images that illustrate his text are exceptionally well chosen and described, serving as more than just examples to make a point, as in themselves they often make multiple points and involve various connections. So in addition to being an overview of the making of such images, the book is also a visual education.

Harris uses nine chapters to frame different contexts and purposes for the making of scientific plant images writ large. In chapter 1, "Plant and page", the frame is early published plant images. He discusses the emerging issue of being able to identify the plants being pictured; some of the illustrators' lack of familiarity with basic plant structure; and the changing technologies used for publishing plant illustrations. An instructive example is given of Leonard Plukenet (1642-1706) misinterpreting a dried specimen from William Dampier (1652-1715) of a Brazilian potato to make an illustration, which was later misidentified by Michel Dunal (1789-1856) as a new species.

In “Themes and trends”, the frame is the advances that followed the first printed plant books. He introduces the concept of portrait vs. epitome – showing the plant in question (assuming it’s being drawn from life or a specimen and not just copied from a book or another drawing) exactly as the artist sees it, versus drawn in a way that smooths out flaws and gives an “ideal” version of the plant, reflecting the way that botanists generally emphasize distinctions between species and leading to their preference for epitomes to enhance identifiability. In 16th-century herbals, a few authors such as Leonhart Fuchs (1501-1566) occasionally had their illustrators create composite images showing, e.g., a single tree in which different sections show the branches in different seasons: with flowers, with fruit, with neither (one plate doing the work of three). In these early printed works we also see illustrators wrestling with scale and magnification, the illustrator’s challenge being to present the most data in the least space with the maximum visual appeal. The concept of what makes an authoritative image evolved over time. Harris also notes the critical importance, then and now, of publishing new information so that it is broadly shared and open to examination and criticism, and the importance of being able to trust the collaboration of artist, scientist and publisher that produced a published image.

In “Science and illustration”, the frame is new ideas. Scientists and illustrators were adjusting to new exotic plants, new systems and a new technology. We see that the history of science is often a process of new ideas replacing older ones. In this regard, illustrators might well be the ones who make the first records that lead to scientific discovery and new ideas. Botanical gardens and herbaria increasingly contained plants new to Europe, and the 18th-century emphasis on classification and nomenclature to cope with the influx of new plants was changing the role and focus of botanical illustrators. Also, use of microscopes led to research that challenged traditional illustrators, as the standard kinds of plant pictures were no longer enough to further an understanding of plant biology. Given the continuous expansion of knowledge, on the one hand new ideas and data were needed, but on the other hand sometimes it was also helpful to view old data with a fresh eye.

In “Blood and treasure” the frame is exploration. The work of European botanical collectors, botanists and illustrators documented patterns of global plant diversity, patterns that would eventually lead to the 19th-century development of two basic concepts of modern biology: Humboldtian biogeography and Darwinian evolution. Well-prepared specimens and accurate illustrations from exotic locales would also continue to be useful to future scientists. Harris amplifies a recurring theme in this book: carefully done work must be published and also deposited in a public repository so that the data can be shared, discussed and tested in the then-present and onward into the future. This is a rich chapter with multiple examples of exploration and plant collection, and several examples of collector/illustrator teams that did or didn’t conduct their work in a way to maximize the usefulness of their results in collections, illustrations, publication and a repository. The “blood” in “Blood and treasure” evokes the deep harm and cost to indigenous people caused by Europeans “discovering” and claiming foreign lands, and to those who were enslaved to produce products for Europe and others. Often the knowledge – not to mention the humanity – of those who lived and worked in those places was discounted by visitors from elsewhere.

In “Garden and grove” the frame is botanical illustration made to advertise and sell plants to Western gardeners. About the uses of gardens and the lure of exotics, Harris observes that “gardens and the plants in them may also be read as palimpsests of political, economic and social opportunities, tension and exploitation.” (p. 141). The 16th-century introduction of tulips is an early example of the “lure of exotics” and their power to transform gardens. Florilegia and later horticultural serials are discussed, with their frequent depiction of “perfect” plants, images shaped by commercial and scientific expectations, and also feeding those expectations. Plant collectors were increasingly voyaging further afield to satisfy the desires of gardeners and scientists. Florilegia and other publications documented special plants in gardens, and even after the gardens are gone, these works still hold some record of their contents.



Zooming in, in “Inside and out” the frame is microscopy and the rise of plant anatomy, morphology and physiology. Early microscopy illustrators were pioneers in opening plants to deep, interior views. One of the early microscopy botanists, Nehemiah Grew (1641-1712), published his own illustrations of his research, doing what all of the illustrators of such work were trying to do: to show exactly what they saw. Grew had an interesting way to present scale, showing a small section of a plant life-size and then the same section MAGNIFIED. He and fellow microscopist Marcello Malpighi (1628-1694) laid a foundation for modern plant anatomy, Johann Moldenhawer (1766-1827) later showed that all plants’ entire structures are made of cells, and Charles-François Brisseau de Mirbel (1776-1854) showed that all plant cells are surrounded by a wall and have a membrane just inside the wall. Wood anatomy was also exposed by microscopes, and illustrations aided in understanding the basis of the mechanical properties of various timber woods. But the difficulties of using 2-dimensional section views to show 3-dimensional wood blocks also showed limitations of traditional botanical illustration. This led to using cameras coupled with microscopes, and later with electron microscopes. Still, botanical illustrators’ skills as editors of scientific images enabled them to collaborate with scientists to help viewers see what was essential in these images. Other important early and later uses of microscopy included pollen research and examinations of molds and other fungi. Artist Franz Bauer (1758-1840) is discussed as an example of an illustrator who developed a deeply trained eye for morphology and anatomy using a microscope.

Zooming back out, in “Habit and habitat” the frame is how plants grow in their locales. Field-based illustrations can produce the first drafts of knowledge of habit and habitat, although those working in the field often found themselves overwhelmed by the intense newness of what they saw, by wild landscapes and the sheer diversity all around them. Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) quoted his colleague Aimé Bonpland: “Bonpland assured me that he would go stark mad if the excitement didn’t stop soon” (p. 207). Humboldt’s quantitative studies and measurements led to the creation of the new field of biogeography. Harris notes the attitudes of some who dismissed locals and their knowledge of their home fauna and flora, resulting in many lost opportunities for learning. He also writes of data generated from those who collected plants while doing something else, and of the way botanical illustrations could tantalize them to collect and explore. Among the examples of field-based illustrators who feel a deep attunement to the places where they worked, we read of Marianne North (1830-1890), who painted foreign plants in their exotic habitats, lamenting seeing landscapes from which the trees had all been cut down by supposed “civilizers”.

In “Observe and test” the frame is using illustration data to generate and test hypotheses. This was seen in the historical changes to knowledge about sexual reproduction in plants. Preachers denounced the reinterpretation of nature by scientists, but growing evidence of various kinds led to inexorable shifts in understanding, such as observations of insect, bird and bat pollination of various plants. Another theme here is the usefulness and limitations of typological botanical illustration. Focusing on floral features to distinguish species can help in comparing flowers, but can also de-emphasize features that make plants individual, which could be important for plant evolution and breeding. Harris also looks at the role of ethnobotanical objects, herbaria, and fossils in reconstructing data on the past. Reconstructions are hypotheses, based on fragments of data that are missing crucial context, and so illustration in this field relies on not overinterpreting the data and on “the integrity and professionalism of botanical artists working at the limits of their knowledge” (p. 246). Another familiar aspect of botanical illustration helping to drive knowledge is drawing repetitive geometrical patterns in plants, such as phyllotactic spirals.

In the final chapter “Sweat and tears” the frame is the importance of botanical education and the role that botanical illustration plays. “Plant blindness”, an inability to notice plants in the world or to understand their importance, is increasingly widespread. Botanical illustrations are a potent tool in helping people to overcome this deficit, not just in education but in sharing illustrations and their context with the public more generally. Teaching botanical drawing to students is one way to connect them with the plant world,

but also to help them to develop attention to detail, to integrate observations and to ask questions. Botanical wall charts became popular with 19th- and 20th-century botanical educators. These large illustrations were of a size such that every student in a classroom could see them, and they illustrated fundamental scientific facts in a straightforward manner that could help develop skills at observing and interpreting natural objects. Similarly, 3-dimensional botanical models in this same period were another way to help students to understand the arrangement of parts of plants. Sadly, only a fraction of the many wall charts and models that were in use before World War II are still in existence.

At this point in our history, thanks to modern technology, philanthropy and the enthusiasm of those charged with stewardship of collections, we have centuries of data summarized in botanical illustrations and much of it is now freely available to all. This is in addition to the hundreds of millions of plant images (mostly digital photos) created in the last 50 years. However, this richness is tempered by the caveat that these images only keep their scientific value to the extent that they are guarded against technological change, degradation and loss of their metadata. Without these safeguards they become mere pictures without context, losing their history, meaning and usefulness for knowledge. Development of new illustrative and reproductive techniques involves similar questions about editing nature; the relationship among data, information and knowledge; and the ethics of evidence and trust. What a rich heritage this is, and it's ours to protect.

Of course this excellent work by this highly qualified author is enriched by many plant illustrations, some familiar, some perhaps not, all with informative captions and context. Every chapter contains examples of specific botanists, collectors and illustrators and what they were working on. The book is capped by an Appendix listing common plant names from the text along with their scientific names, References (chapter by chapter), Further reading, photo credits, and an index. The 26-page References section in particular is extensive, detailed, and full of interesting leads to additional reading and discovery. I can't recommend this book highly enough – the deceptively simple title, “The Beauty of the Flower”, is a bit like a simple flower hiding the wonders within. There is so much good history here, and many connections made. Thanks to Stephen Harris for writing this book.

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# CBHL Newsletter, Issue 173, June 2024

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## Submissions Welcome!

Articles may be submitted to Judy Stevenson, Editor, [newsletter@cbhl.net](mailto:newsletter@cbhl.net).  
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