

This all began while driving across country about fifteen years ago. I paused and got out along the road just to stretch. It was in early summer. In a semi-circle of not more than two hundred feet in any direction, I was struck by how many beautiful plants there were. They lay there unnoticed. Everyone was passing by in a hurry and not noticing any of them. I was even more bothered by the notion that God made them all. It was a simple thought but it hung on and on and on. I felt guilty for my shallowness. I do not like feeling ashamed any more than anyone else. It was not that I felt a great amount of shame. I just could not shake the idea that it was not right to be so ignorant. Still, I thought that I could easily shake the feeling by just buying a book and checking out the names.

I bought a book and looked at others. I was amazed by what I did not find. These books did not have the plants that I had found. Then I recalled that there may be about two and one half *billion* plants. I assumed that I had just not found the right book. After buying nearly fifty books, I found a great one called "*A Field Guide to the Plants of Arizona*" by Anne Orth Epple and Lewis E. Epple which, quite thoroughly, represents the plants of Arizona. Now it seemed that finally it was game over, and the end of the story. Still it bothered me that even with this book I still could not be sure. Not really sure! Even with many more books, I was perplexed by how hard botany is, and how easy it was to be wrong. I also found that "*The Jepson Desert Manual*" by the University of California is a good help in discovering the true identity of most Arizona plants.

Error arises mostly because the pictures are just too small and sometimes the descriptions are just too vague. Technical books often use descriptions that each writer thinks are totally specific and accurate. Still these books often pass over the more outstanding details. Also, technical books often provide much too narrow trade jargon. Even by examining every word with a focused microscope, much extra translation is needed to determine their intent. What happens with any kind of description by words is that a writer assumes that others possess the same word associations. Still "*The Arizona Flora*" by Kearney and Peebles is the greatest and the best reference book to help identify, *by words*, what a plant might be.

I was getting into computers shortly after my curiosity about the plants of Arizona started. Perhaps I could find a program that could be used to display pictures on computers to help someone learn about these plants. I soon discovered how very naive my thoughts were. No such program existed that was even remotely sufficient. A program needed to be created. I knew many computer friends so I asked around. I found out that none of my friends knew enough programming. So I began to explore the internet for information, to try to learn enough to be able to even ask the right questions. It was soon painfully obvious that if I wanted to understand, I had to learn much more about programming. Little did I know that it takes about four to six years to learn how. I still decided to jump in.

When you are poor in money and know how, you must be creative. When pictures could be taken, I went after them. When the plants were gone each year, I took advantage of the time to learn how to program, and to develop my ideas for what I wanted the

program to become. It took over five years.

I decided that approximately five hundred plants would fit on a CD. At that time, a CD was the largest media. Now DVD's are becoming common. I was not sure how much time gathering five hundred plants would require. Five hundred seemed enough to be content. I decided if anyone increased their awareness of these plants by even fifty, I would be pleased.

The first hundred took forever. The next fifty seemed to take forever. Each ten after that seemed a major accomplishment. It was very challenging to discover new plants in each new area. But there was one, very great and special exception. Greer, Arizona. Greer is a miracle and a paradise of plants. Most of the development was work, and more work. (Still it was like prospecting for gold. Which is something else that I love to do. I find building houses is very, very interesting, too.)

This program is a good beginning. I have not heard anything but a wish for me to keep on keeping on. Now I plan to do the same thing for every state in the country and other places in North America. I also have a plan to accomplish it. It is estimated to require fifteen years, especially now that I have finished the programming part of the CD. Already, we have begun taking pictures and gather reference books for four more states and Costa Rica. I also plan to market the CD with and without a book so that it could be sold easily in book stores. I also have a plan, sometime in the future, to market these CDs with an extra CD of short video clips of each states interesting attractions.

Some schools, and some not-for-profit groups, may possibly be granted the use of some of the pictures on this CD, if you communicate your desired use to me by email at staff@nambotany.com. If someone has an interest in using this program format for some other for-profit purposes, such as for minerals, insects, fish, birds, or something other than for plants, please contact me and we can discuss the possibility. With some other slight adjustments to the program, it could also be altered to be usable for input by students in colleges for botany research programs and to qualify for botany master degree studies by identifying and posting pictures of three hundred or more differing specimens.

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