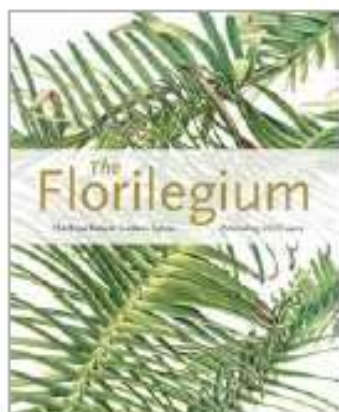


For the bookshelf

Colleen Morris and Louisa Murray (2016)
*The Florilegium: the Royal Botanic Gardens
Sydney celebrating 200 years*

Florilegium Society at the Royal Botanic Gardens
Sydney, Hunters Hill NSW, hardback, 224 pp.
hardcover \$90, softcover \$65



Dr Shirley Sherwood OBE, Patron of the Florilegium Society, can be very proud of her antipodean offspring. I have known of her work for many years as a collector and inspiration/motivator for modern approaches to botanical art through exhibitions, commissions, the gallery at Kew, and wonderful books such as her collaboration with Dr John Kress of the Smithsonian on the truly superb *The art of plant evolution*.

Now, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, we have this splendid publication put together by the Florilegium Society of that body. We (AGHS members) should all celebrate because our own organisation invested in the project through the Kindred Spirits Fund and donations from several branches and many members.

Though it had an earlier meaning, 'florilegium' has generally been used over the last few hundred years to mean 'a collection of paintings of a particular garden or place'. Many of us remember the thrill of finally seeing Banks' *Florilegium* in the 1980s, some 200 years after Sydney Parkinson's drawings had been prepared.

In 1998 the Shirley Sherwood *Collection of Botanical Art* was shown at the SH Ervin Gallery in Sydney. It coincided with an astonishing historical collection of Ferdinand Bauer's work, curated by Peter Watts and Jo Anne Pomfrett at the Museum of Sydney. Well known botanical artist Beverly Allen, working with Margot Child, curator of the first *Botanica*, then set out to establish the Florilegium Society, and here we have its product.

With an excellent historical introduction from Colleen Morris and high quality scientific entries by Louisa Murray, the works of Australian and overseas artists are beautifully reproduced. They present in their diversity the full range of approaches to modern botanical art. The paintings represent not only Australian plants but the diverse collections of all three of the Royal Botanic Gardens – in Sydney, Mt Tomah and Mt Annan.

From July to October the Museum of Sydney will show the works of this book in an exhibition curated by Colleen Morris (see pages 28–29, this issue).

Australians have been very well served over recent decades by an extraordinary diversity of books showcasing botanical illustration in all its diversity. From Helen Hewson's publication in 1999 of *300 years of botanical illustration* and the collective works of Richard Aitken to the 2004 *Herbarium* by Robyn Stacey and Ashley Hay, and the wonderful doorstopper from the Art Gallery of Ballarat in 2012, *Capturing Flora*.

Now *The Florilegium* comes to us. We should be grateful, and rush to buy a copy.

Max Bourke AM is a former deputy chair of AGHS with extensive heritage and arts experience.

Nina Edwards (2015) *Weeds*
Reaktion Books, London, hardback, 224 pp.
\$39.99

Weeds is an attractive, optimistic and – perhaps appropriately for the topic – at times a rambling journey through past, present and future ideas of weeds. Weeds did not exist before there were people – they are a human construct, and this construct has changed dramatically through the course of human history. While the need to weed intensively cultivated gardens and fields remains, many other



ideas of weeds have come and gone. Some plants are weeds in one place but not others: 'Burdock is a weed in the field, but a prized plant in the border' (p 29). Weeds have been incredibly important and useful as medicines, poisons and food. They have been used as symbols of corruption, disorder, and 'moral foulness' (p 96) and have been popularised as man-eaters (Audrey in 'Little Shop of Horrors') and as monsters ('The Day of the Triffids'). While the book has an English voice there are enough examples from Australia and around the world to interest most readers. The well-known story of *Echium*