

Review of the book:

Trees and Shrubs of Amritsar: a pictorial field guide**INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOOK**

Sl.	Item	Detail
1.	Title of the Book	Trees and Shrubs of Amritsar: a pictorial field guide
2.	Authors	Avinash Kaur Nagpal, Akanksha Bakshi, Nitika Sharma, Gurveen Kaur, Jaskirat Kaur Rooprai
3.	First copyright date	2024 (BSMPS)
4.	Type of book	A Pictorial Field Guide
5.	General subject matter	Identification of trees and shrubs grown everywhere
6.	Publisher	Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, Dehra Dun, India.
7.	Number of pages	Pp. viii+240
8.	Binding type	Flexi bound
9.	Special features	The book contains adequate botanical characteristics of bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, and spines can truly resolve the correct identity of many plants even without comprehensive knowledge of botany.
10.	Colour plates	Laced with multiple high quality colour photos for every species included in the book.
11.	Price	₹ 1200 (MRP)
12.	ISBN 13	978-93-6028-319-3
13.	Summary and background	Please the write up below
14.	Critical analysis (such as strength and weaknesses)	<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each plant has its verified botanical name, popular name, habit, economic importance, and description of stem, leaves, inflorescence, flower, fruits, and seeds. All the photographs are of the authors. <p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing an index of the families of plants.
15.	Conclusion	The authors aim to inspire people to plant more trees and shrubs to enrich urban greenspaces in Amritsar and other cities.

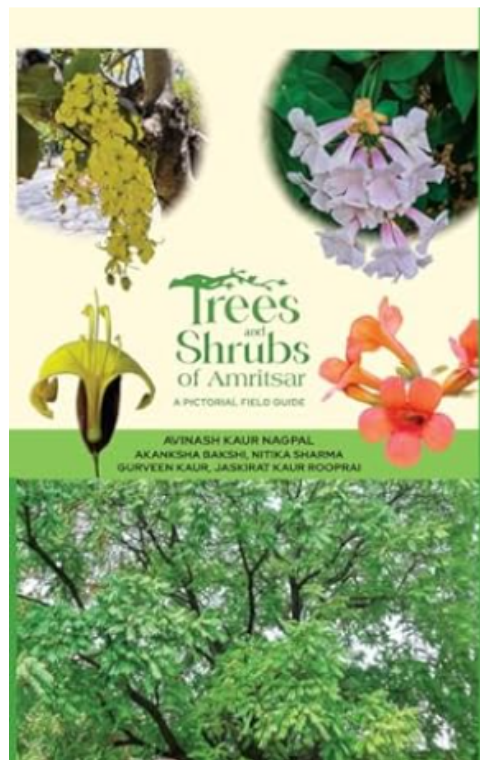
Review of the book
Trees and Shrubs of Amritsar: a pictorial field guide

Review by
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Suggested citation: Shankar, U. (2025). Review of “Trees and Shrubs of Amritsar: a pictorial field guide” by Nagpal et al. (2024), Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, Dehra Dun, India. Pp. viii+240 (ISBN: 978-93-6028-319-3), MRP INR 1200. The NEHU Journal xx: xxx-xxx). Price: ₹ 1200.



Introduction

“Be like a tree. The tree gives shade even to those who cut off its boughs,” said Sri Chaitanya. Soaked with such learning, the lead author, Prof. (Mrs.) Avinash Kaur Nagpal, along with her enthusiastic research scholars, has crafted a delightful pictorial field guide of trees and shrubs that adorn the Golden Temple city of Amritsar in the plains of Punjab. The authors aim to

inspire people to plant more trees and shrubs to enrich urban greenspaces in Amritsar and other cities anywhere in the tropics.

Background

The book unlocks a brief history of the founding of Amritsar in 1577 by Sri Guru Ramdas ji, the fourth Sikh Guru. This section of the introduction encompasses beautiful pictures of the complex of the Golden Temple, Guru Nanak Dev University, Khalsa College, Jallianwala Bagh, Wagah Border, and others. The second section apprises the reader about trees and shrubs, highlighting their importance in the biosphere and their role in the culture and livelihoods. The authors draw attention to bio-aesthetic planning along roads and rail tracks, in public gardens and parks, and in open spaces of institutional compounds. The third section of the introduction is enriched with a glimpse of the heritage trees in Amritsar. The depictions include Lachi Ber, Ber Baba Buda ji, Dukh Bhanjani Ber (all of these belonging to the genus *Zizyphus*), mulberry tree at Gurdwara Toot Sahib (*Morus* sp.), Karir tree at Gurudwara Bibeksar Sahib (*Capparis decidua*), Vat Vriksha in Bada Hanuman Mandir (*Ficus benghalensis*), a more than 400 years old Pipal tree at Gurdwara Pipli Sahib (*Ficus religiosa*) and Simbal (*Bombax ceiba*), Arjun (*Terminalia arjuna*), Samudraphala (*Barringtonia acutangula*), Pilkhan (*Ficus tsjakela*) and a maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) growing in Ram Bagh. The fourth section apprises the readers of the morphological features of trees and shrubs that are useful in identification. The idea is that the features of bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds and spines can truly resolve the correct identity of many plants even without comprehensive knowledge of botany. Arrangement of leaves on the stem, type of leaves, types and colours of flowers and their parts are the traits of maximum taxonomic value for identification. For those who are curious about botanical names of plants, an introductory account of plant nomenclature is included in the fifth and final section of the introduction.

Critical analysis

The main body of the book describes 100 trees and shrubs. Arranged in alphabetical order of the botanical names and starting with *Abrus precatorius* and ending with *Yucca gloriosa*, each plant is dedicated a two-page space for description. Although there seems to be no bias or any preference to include a plant in the book, the authors have successfully packed in a great diversity of native as well as non-native plants suited for planting in a variety of spaces. These include gymnosperms (*Cycas circinalis*, *C. revoluta*, *Pinus roxburghii*, *Platycladus orientalis*), palms (*Caryota urens*, *Livistona chinensis*, *Phoenix dactylifera*), climbers

(*Bougainvillea glabra*, *Campis grandiflora*, *Clerodendrum splendens*, *Jasminum sambac*, *Masona alliacea*, *Passiflora coccinea*, *Phanera vahlii*), edible fruit trees (*Aegle marmelos*, *Citrus x limon*, *Dillenia indica*, *Grewia asiatica*, *Mangifera indica*, *Prunus persica*, *Psidium guajava*, *Punica granatum*, *Pyrus communis*, *Syzygium cumini*), and medicinal plants (*Azadirachta indica*, *Calotropis procera*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Justicia adhatoda*, *Moringa oleifera*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Putranjiva roxburghii*, *Sapindus mukorossi*, *Terminalia arjuna*, *T. bellirica*).

Each plant has its verified botanical name, popular name, habit, economic importance, and description of stem, leaves, inflorescence, flower, fruits, and seeds. A glossary of botanical terms makes it easy for a layman to understand botanical terms used in the book. Indices of binomials and common names of plants at the end of the book facilitate spotting a species inside. The authors highlight the conservation status of all plants according to the worldwide accepted IUCN Red List. While most of the plants are of least concern or not yet assessed, two of all the species are endangered (*Cycas circinalis*, *Tectona grandis*), two are vulnerable (*Eucalyptus longifolia*, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*), and two are near-threatened (*Platyclusus orientalis*, *Swietenia mahogoni*). A tree of Malvaceae, *Dombeya acutangular*, is actually of least concern and not critically endangered as mentioned.

Understandably, a book of this precision would see the light of day only after the meticulous efforts of the authors and their associates. The novelty of the book lies in the fact that all the photographs depicted in the book are the primary work of the authors themselves or of their commissioned photographers. The authors have deeply devoted themselves to the exactness of the botanical identification of the trees and shrubs. Besides, they have successfully captured many identifying traits in photographs, making it easier for a student of botany to identify them in the field conditions without the help of a mentor. The authors aptly believe that the information in the book is, although mainly a collection from Amritsar, equally applicable to any other city in the country and many others abroad. One thing I would surely demand from the authors is an index of the families of plants.

Conclusion

The book is highly commendable for arousing the interest of all and particularly of students of “not-so-preferred” classical botany. The book will prove a very handy compendium for the foresters, plantation managers, horticulturists, conservation biologists, ecologists, plant taxonomists, environmental scientists, policy planners and all those who realise the importance of trees and shrubs. I feel honoured to wholeheartedly recommend the book to all

plant lovers across the globe. We must remember what Franklin D. Roosevelt advised, "*A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.*" And, also the words of Everett Ruess, "*We can learn a lot from trees: they're always grounded but never stop reaching heavenward.*" Stocks last quickly, and therefore, grab a copy, folks; it only costs you a pizza!