METHODS OF APPROACH IN TEACHING TAXONOMY

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Some years ago a questionnaire addressed to taxonomists, plant workers and educators indicated quite clearly a belief that there exists at present a dearth of taxonomists, of taxonomic teaching and also a lack of appreciation of the subject. While the replies to these questionnaires easily indicated the need for taxonomy in the various fields of plant study, and in biology in general, the reasons for the apparent failure of the subject were not so apparent. In fact, many reasons were given and with varying emphasis. I was at that time a member of the committee issuing the questionnaire and have been much interested in the matter ever since.

It is undeniable that taxonomy has been unpopular for the last several decades. Among the many contributory reasons often mentioned are the following: (1) Lack of available instruction; (2) deficiencies in type of instruction; (3) lack of openings for employment in the profession; (4) lack of well-paying positions as an ultimate goal; (5) dearth of students with a "taxonomic mind"; (6) reputation of taxonomy as an unimportant branch of botany; (7) lack of appreciation of one's taxonomic work by others; (8) lack of sympathy with the unstable condition of nomenclature and group limits; (9) difficulty of pursuing taxonomy away from taxonomic centers; (10) a more detailed training to become a good teacher of taxonomy than is necessary in other branches of botany. These
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