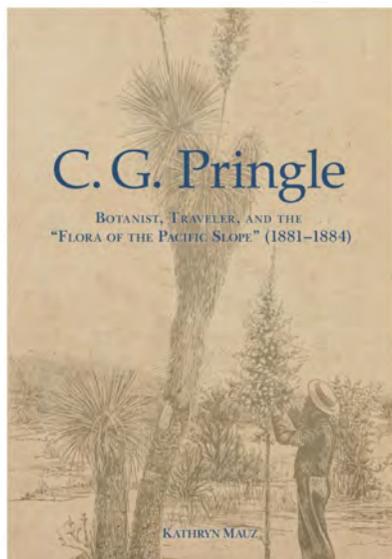


Book Reviews

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C. G. Pringle: Botanist, Traveler, and the “Flora of the Pacific Slope” (1881-1884) by Kathryn Mauz. *Memoirs of the New York Botanical Garden*, v. 120. Heritage series, no. 3. New York: New York Botanical Garden, 2018. xxii, 737 pages, 67 black & white illustrations, maps (some color). Hardcover, \$129.99. ISBN 978-0-89327-556-3



We (I) have mostly neglected reviewing new titles in the distinguished series “Memoirs of the New York Botanical Garden,” which has been published since 1900, and is well represented in the research collections of CBHL and university libraries. The series’ narrow academic content (in floristics, taxonomy, and systematics) is primarily of interest to equally narrow circles of specialists, and reviews that have appeared are mostly to be found in botanical journals like *Rhodora*, *Taxon*, *Systematic Botany*, and *Kew Bulletin*. Historically, NYBG Press published little of interest to the general reader and the familiar dull paper covers of “Memoirs” seemed to shout that message. Recently, however, cover illustrations might be color photographs, even for technical volumes like this year’s *Venezuelan Ruellia (Acanthaceae): A Monograph* (Memoirs, v. 119). And it is not just marketing: The editorial scope seems also to have expanded to include volumes like the nifty *Common Lichens of Northeastern North America: A Field Guide* (Memoirs, v. 112) by Troy McMullin and Frances Anderson. A true field guide, it is aimed at both specialists and non-specialists and fills a demonstrable need in the crowded world of field guides (after all, no one can take more than a few steps carrying Irwin Brodo’s *Lichens of North America*).

RBG Kew has developed its general interest publishing (not always with unqualified success) while maintaining its paramount commitment to scientific publishing. It has won eight CBHL Annual Literature Awards—more than any other publisher—and has been nominated for many more; in contrast, NYBG Press to date has had no award winner, although titles have been nominated occasionally—*The Macrolichens of New England* (Memoirs v. 96) and

Britton's Botanical Empire: The New York Botanical Garden and American Botany, 1888-1929 (Memoirs, v. 94), for example. It happens that the latter volume was also the first in a new series in botanical history that NYBG has named the Heritage Series. Number two in the series, *Thomas Walter and His Plants: The Life and Works of a Pioneer American Botanist*, was reviewed in *CBHL Newsletter*, no. 147. Number three in the series is *C. G. Pringle* and so we are correcting past neglect.

I have to confess that I was intimidated both by the subject—flora of the Western United States—and what seemed an extraordinary 737 pages devoted to just four years of Pringle’s plant collecting, especially since he is better known for his later Mexican collections. It came as something of a relief to see that just a little over forty percent constitutes the body of the book. The rest includes five appendices of plant specimens collected and distributed by Pringle; notes; repositories, resources, and literature cited; and two indexes (one of people and place names and the other of specimen label and scientific names).

Pringle was a third generation Vermont farmer and a horticulturist who was recognized for his hybrids of wheat, oats, potatoes, and fruit (B. K. Bliss & Sons catalogs featured his award winning ‘Snowflake’ potato). Botanizing in Vermont’s fields, woods, and mountains led him to his life’s passion and he became one of the most gifted, tenacious, and productive field botanists of his time and any other. He distributed an astonishing 500,000 specimens of about 20,000 species, more than 1,200 of which were new to science. And had he collected, as so many did, only what he thought might be new species and genera, he might have had even more credited to him, but the “movement to synthesize broader understandings of biology, geography and the relatedness of things” inspired him to collect widely. As a result his specimens provide invaluable portraits of plant populations as they existed in specific times and places.

Consolidation. Dispersal. Orphaning. We are all too familiar with existential threats to herbaria and libraries. This book would not have been possible without them. Mauz examined Pringle specimens in twenty-four herbaria—most of which are at institutions that are home to CBHL archives and libraries. The specimens Pringle distributed as “Flora of the Pacific Slope” were the starting point for Mauz



Photograph of the author by Patrick Andrade/RELIC Fine Art Studios, Denver, Colorado.



Dalea pringlei A. Gray var. *pringlei*. Pringle Herbarium, University of Vermont. Photograph by Kathryn Mauz.

as she traced his travels. He corresponded with and collected for the most prominent botanists of his time—Asa Gray, George Engelmann, Charles Sprague Sargent, Charles Parry, George Davenport among others. Pringle was a modest, reticent, even laconic man who seems to have been deeply averse to self promotion. His letters were descriptively spare (to convey sublime scenery, Mauz uses observations written by other travelers); and he did not keep a diary during the years covered by this volume. Mauz uses hotel receipts, invoices for supplies, deeds, surveys, rail and boat schedules, passenger lists and hotel arrivals published in local newspapers, and more to recreate the day-to-day detail of Pringle’s activities.

Pringle was hired by Sargent, an impatient, “overbearing,” and “exacting master,” to collect logs of western species for the Jesup Collection of North American Woods at the American Museum of Natural History. It involved monumental labor and his contributions account for nearly one-quarter of the total. He seemed to take more pleasure in his labors for Gray and Davenport with whom he maintained long and fruitful relationships. Mauz effectively uses excerpts of correspondence among the botanists to convey the excitement of finding and verifying a new species or genus—not a swashbuckling adventure, but there were rivalries among collectors and Indian troubles to think of.

The words “rare,” “endemic,” “possibly now extinct species,” “type specimen,” “new species,” appear throughout the book as Mauz names the plants Pringle collected. It’s exciting. So why with thousands of new species still described every year, has field botany lost its luster?

There are parallels between this book and one about another great nineteenth century field botanist, Augustine Henry, who was Pringle’s near contemporary. *C. G. Pringle* is denser and more challenging reading than *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry and his Chinese Plant Collectors* by Seamus O’Brien (2012 Annual Literature Award Winner). This is not a travelogue about the historical West for a casual reader, but it should be of great interest to historians, ecologists, environmentalists, and botanists of Western flora.

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Gardenlust: A Botanical Tour of the World’s Best New Gardens by Christopher Woods. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 2018. 416 pages, color illustrations. Hardcover, \$40.00. ISBN: 9781604697971

Gardenlust is a seductive recent title introducing readers to fifty new and exciting gardens that have been built throughout the world in the last eighteen years. Author Christopher Woods is former director and chief designer of Chanticleer and has served in leadership positions at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, VanDusen Botanical Garden, Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden, Fairmount Park Conservancy, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society’s Meadowbrook Farm, and the American Public Gardens Association. Although Woods cautions that his choices are personal, the contemporary gardens and landscapes featured are unequivocally appealing and their designs are quite diverse.

