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Book Review

The Piñon Pine. A Natural and Cultural History. Ronald M. Lanner. 208 pp. illus. University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1981. \$13.50 (hardcover); \$8.50 (paperback).

While Lanner's book is basically technical, it is written in a readable and entertaining style that will appeal to a wide public beyond the botanically trained audience.

It is often believed that pinyon pine "nuts" are relatively unimportant as foods, but locally they constitute a valuable adjunct to Indian diet. Growing where the flora is extremely sparse because of desert conditions and producing ample supplies of nutritious seeds, these pines have usually not been accorded the botanical and ethnobotanical attention they deserve.

Lanner, professor of forestry at Utah State University, has devoted many years to taxonomic, paleobotanical, genetic, dendrological, and physiological research on the pinyon pine. This book considers many aspects of the tree: evolution, ecology, its relationship to man and the inter-relationships between the pine and animals, land management policies affecting the tree, and many others. A section on harvesting and cookery of pinyon nuts by his wife, Harriette Lanner, completes the book.

Throughout the treatise the author's deep love of the tree is evident. "Man, impressed by power, judges trees by their size. We name our grand sequoias after generals and praise our redwood, firs and tall pines Trees that live more modestly . . . are thought poor and humble, objects of pity. The piñon pine . . . is regarded as lowly, a pygmy, a dwarf, a scrub conifer But a tree is what you make of it, and once, much was made of the piñon. This little tree produced the fuel, building materials, food and medicines that enabled pre-historic Indians to establish their cultures . . . and to survive into the present"

Would that more of our minor economic plants had such absorbing and inclusive volumes dedicated to their understanding. This little volume is a big contribution to economic botany.

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