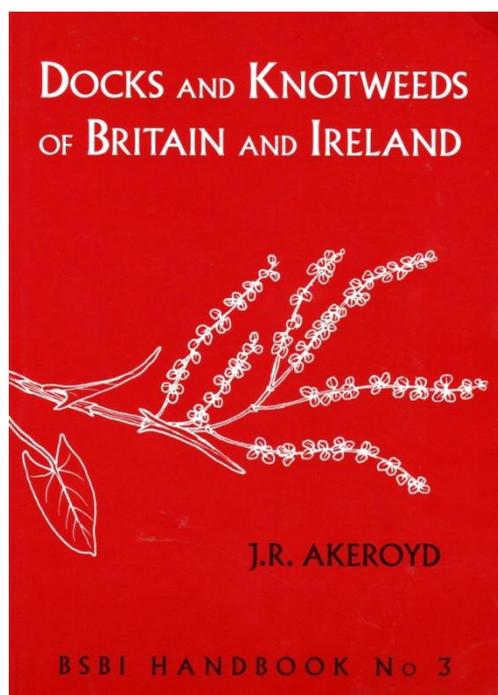


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J.R. AKEROYD, 2014, *Docks and Knotweeds of Britain and Ireland*. Botanical Society of London, 258 pp.

This is a second edition of *Docks and Knotweeds of the British Isles* (1981) by J.E. Lousley and D.H. Kent, covering the recent developments in the taxonomy of Polygonaceae. As a result of his personal continuing interest in this group, mainly since 1975, J.R. Akeroyd has rigorously revised the first edition of the handbook in collaboration with Douglas Kent. The author has been much involved with the revision of the first volume of *Flora Europaea* and therefore, his expertise in this group is well grounded. The work encompasses almost 40 years of botanical research and can be considered nothing less than essential by professional and amateur botanists throughout Europe.

Organisation of the text includes a good introductory section, and several chapters dealing with fundamental aspects of the family, such as taxonomic classification and literature, ecology, pollination, seed dispersal and germination, and economic uses. Emphasis was also put on identification of Polygonaceae and recognising *Rumex* hybrids. Important herbaria holding extensive collections of plants of this family are recommended in order to facilitate voucher comparisons.

The handbook covers 83 species belonging to 11 genera. Of these, 51 are native or well established and 32 are adventive to Britain and Ireland. When one is working on an unknown plant of Polygonaceae, the key to genera of this family will provide considerable help at the beginning, especially as in recent years some genera have undergone profound revisions of taxonomy and nomenclature. Of the most notable examples is *Persicaria*, which is treated here

as a distinct genus derived from the former *Polygonum* sensu lato. Then the keys to subgenera, sections and species follow. Genera, subgenera and sections have been given here a good morphological description. For Section ACONOGONON of the *Persicaria*, keys for vegetative stages are additionally offered. Each taxonomic level has been described thoroughly.

The bulk of the book deals adequately with descriptions of species by synonymy, common name and detailed morphology. The general distribution is given as well, along with details of occurrence in Britain and Ireland. Since many Polygonaceae plants are ruderals or weeds of cultivation, their specific ecological preferences and the first documented date of recording or place of origin are often given, invariably supported by clear source references. Subspecies and hybrids are meticulously described.

Ann Farrer has done a very nice job of illustrating this volume. For scientists using this handbook, the great value lies in the line drawings of high quality that accompany the descriptions of species. Besides the overall aspect of plants, details of features that assist with identification are nicely presented. Distribution maps in Britain and Ireland are provided for some taxa. For utility reasons, a glossary of morphological terms is provided at the end, which will be surely appreciated by non-native English speaking botanists.

Although the guide focuses on the docks and knotweeds of Britain and Ireland, I am sure it will be useful to a much wider audience because of the inclusiveness of information on the general distribution of species, invasive character and morphological descriptions which might complete the wide spectrum of variation in species traits. The work will most probably be practical for quite some time.

Undoubtedly, the handbook will be gladly received by those working with flora in the region of Romania, as plenty of the covered species occur here as well, just to mention the very common natives *Persicaria alpina*, *P. vivipara*, *P. bistorta*, *Rumex acetosa*, *R. crispus*, *Oxyria digyna*, or the rare *Rumex scutatus*. There are also examples of cultivated species, such as the Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) and Tibetan Rhubarb (*Rheum officinale*).

In conclusion, I highly recommend this handbook to anybody who works with species identifications in any part of Europe, and I believe it is certainly indispensable to those conducting floristic or ecology research, particularly in ruderal, cultivated or wet habitats. Likewise, for those specialized in the taxonomy of Polygonaceae, this work will certainly become a benchmark.

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