

Book Review

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MycoKey 2.1. Keys to 850 genera of Asco- and Basidiomycota from Northern Europe.

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Price: one license 49 € (+ VAT), 5-license education discount 190 € (+ VAT), and 10-license education discount 320 € (+ VAT).

About two years ago (Czech Mycology 57: 175, 2005) I published a review of MycoKey version 1.0. At that time, it contained 528 genera of Basidiomycota with more than 2000 colour photographs of representative species, more than 5,000 references, descriptions, information on generic types, authors, synonyms and numbers of species.

Early 2007, a new version 2.1 appeared on DVD. This new version covers 2,200 species of more than 850 genera of Basidiomycota and discomycetes illustrated with 3,600 pictures and including more than 14,000 references to literature. The main languages are English and Danish, but one also find vernacular fungal names in Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Norwegian and Swedish. MycoKey moreover contains information about the edibility of many species.

For identification, synoptical keys have been included. The input part contains a sequence of screens presenting the different characters. These characters can be entered either by means of checkboxes or pop-up menus. Identification starts with a screen to select the carpophore type, followed with screens concerning the character of hymenium, carpophore size, colour, ecology and trophic strategy. Next screens contain detailed pictures of microscopic characters. There are two levels of synoptical keys available: (1) an easy version searching only among common genera using easy characters; recommended to children from 10 years of age, and (2) a full version working with all data about genera and species contained on the DVD (including microscopic characters).

Preparing this review, I tested the key by entering data about fungi of different genera of both ascomycetous and basidiomycetous fungi. My personal experience can be summarised as follows. When one uses only exact characters, generic identification works rather easily and precisely. On the other hand, if one is not certain that some of the used characters are absolutely correct, do not use them! One can easily lose the way. However, if the identification results raise doubts, one can easily and clearly compare (among two genera) or analyse (among more genera) differential characters important for all selected genera.

MycoKey works on both Personal and Macintosh computers. You need the Mac OS 10.3/10.4 or Windows XP operating system, about 800 MB free hard drive space and a display of 1024 pixels wide. You also need a rather fast internet connection to download the 460 MB installer. If your internet connection is slow and you have a DVD drive, MycoKey 2.1 is also available as a hybrid Mac/Windows DVD.

MycoKey 2.1 is a user-friendly programme, which I can recommend to all mycologists working on macromycetes. Next details can be found on the following web page: www.mycokokey.com.

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