

Preface

This primer is based on short courses in botanical Latin run in Australia at the Northern Territory Herbarium, Darwin, and the Western Australian Herbarium, Perth. We presented these independently and, on discovering that we had similar approaches, decided to combine them as a book.

Between 1 January 1935 and 31 December 2011 it was mandatory that new plant names be accompanied by a diagnosis or description in Latin. For non-fossil algae the period was 1 January 1958 to 31 December 2011, while for fossil plants published on or after 1 January 1996 either Latin or English could be used. From 1 January 2012, descriptions of all of these are permissible in either Latin or English. Besides this, there will always remain a need for translating from Latin in order to understand the many botanical texts in this language.

William Stearn's wonderful *Botanical Latin* appeared in 1966 and has gone through many new impressions and editions, as well as a Chinese translation. It provides almost all one could require for translating to and from Latin, but a primer (in the sense of works such as Kennedy's *Shorter Latin Primer*, providing the basic needs) may be useful for those who need to translate the more straightforward diagnoses and short descriptions now widely used when describing new taxa. Besides its concise approach, our work also differs from Stearn's in including many more terms (especially from cryptogamic groups) in the vocabulary, while excluding many terms not used in descriptions.