

Preface

This book started as a multi-authored account on the many-sided topic of Vegetation Ecology (more commonly called plant community ecology in North America) because this modern field of science can hardly be treated by one or a few authors. In this second edition still more topics have been treated in separate chapters. As editors we have certainly had some influence on the choice and contents of the various chapters, but nevertheless the chapters are independent essays on important aspects of vegetation ecology.

This edition consists of 16 chapters following an introductory chapter, three more than in the first edition. In addition to the 13 original chapters, which are all updated and adapted to the new structure (described below), we were able to include three new topical chapters. In connection with this new structure, the introduction no longer contains the mini-essays that were in the first chapter of the first edition. Instead we will refer to that chapter (van der Maarel 2005), as several authors in this book do, and present a simplified introduction in this edition.

We have modified the sequence of topics by starting this edition with the chapters (2–4) that deal mainly with the concept, structure, environmental relations and dynamics of plant communities. The second group of chapters (5–9) continue on the internal organization of plant communities. Subsequent chapters (10–12) deal with the structural and functional aspects and processes in plant communities as part of ecosystems. Here the emphasis is on the organization of plant communities in relation to the ecosystem of which they form a part. Chapters 13 and 14 deal with human impacts on plant communities in their ecosystem and landscape setting. The final chapters (15–17) address communities and geographically larger units in their distribution over regions and continents.

The editors, having been ecological pen friends for over 25 years, have thoroughly enjoyed the correspondence and their first face-to-face meeting in 2011. It was very rewarding to learn about each other's specialisations and favourite vegetation types – which we were also allowed to show on the cover of our

book. We also enjoyed the vivid exchange of views with the chapter authors and we hope that their chapters will be appreciated both as essays in their own right and as intrinsic parts of this book.

We should like to thank several members of the editorial and production staff of Wiley-Blackwell Science at Oxford for their help. Particular thanks go to Aileen Castell, Mitch Fitton, Kelvin Matthews and Senior Commissioning Editor Ward Cooper for getting us started and keeping an eye on the work.

Finally we hope that this book will find its way across the world of vegetation scientists and plant ecologists.

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