These notes are to help navigate *Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide*. There are a number of places in this field guide where people often get confused, and hopefully pointing these out will ease identifying plants in this book. One of the reasons for some of the difficulty with Newcomb’s is that it simplifies botanical concepts, which can lead to confusion especially if you are already familiar with these terms in their more familiar form. An obvious example is what Newcomb’s calls a ‘divided leaf’ would generally be a compound leaf in most sources.

When first using this book, identify plants you already know, so you can backtrack if you find yourself on the wrong page or plant.

**Newcomb’s Basics**

1. Newcomb’s is divided into sections; read each of these before using.
2. Three sections guide you through the plant identification process.
3. The other sections should be read as well, as they define the terms and approaches that Newcomb’s uses which are sometime different than conventional usage.
4. Note that the first 22 pages use Roman numerals. If using Newcomb’s for teaching, it can be helpful to have students write the regular numbers alongside.

**Sections of Newcomb’s—in order of appearance**

1. **The Three Classifications**—these are either on the inside of the front cover or the first page depending on the edition.
   - This is where you start the plant identification.
2. **Illustrations of inflorescences** (no title)—across from *The Three Classifications*
   - Drawings of various types of inflorescences.
3. **The Key System and How It Works**—pages x-xiii
   - Description and notes on how to use the keys.
4. **Explanation of Basic Terms**—pages xiv-xvii
   - Description of the terms used in the Three Classifications
5. **Floral Structure**—pages xviii
   - Basic description of flower parts.
6. **Glossary**—pages xix-xxii
7. **Locator Key**—pages 1-14
   - The second part of keying out of the plant. The number gained from *The Three Classifications* will take you to this section.
8. **Descriptions of Species**—page 15
   - Covers symbols and abbreviations used in the text.
9. **The Plants** *pages 16-463*
   - Where to go after the Locator Key. These pages have illustrations and detailed description of the plants.

10. **Index** *pages 465-490*

11. **Illustrations of Leaves** *back pages or back cover*
   - Drawing of leaves and leaf arrangements with associated terms

**Considerations and Tips**
1. A good way of learning how to use this and other plant identification guides is to start by identifying plants that you already know. If you end up at the wrong plant, you can follow your steps backwards and see where the mistake was made.
2. Once the layout of the keys is learned, the system in Newcomb’s is pretty easy to follow.
3. Newcomb’s uses some unconventional terms which may be confusing, especially if you are used to these terms used differently. This is particularly true with leaves. Look through the illustrations and pages describing them.
4. Some of the leaf confusion arises from the following;
   - Whether the leaves are toothed, lobed or divided. It is important to read the section describing these differences. For instance leaves lobed at the base are often considered entire, as opposed to lobed.
   - The book does not distinguish between compound and simple leaves.
   - Whether leaves are opposite or alternate on a plant if it has both. This is sometimes seen with opposite leaves near the top of a plant (the growing part) and alternate towards the base.
5. The Newcomb’s key is not dichotomous (with just two choices) and it is important to look for third or fourth choices when keying.
6. When looking on a plant species page, look for *continued* at the bottom of the page, as the plant might be on the next page.
7. Under *Plant Type* in the Three Classifications people often miss the last two options of whether the plant is a shrub or a vine.
8. When looking thru the species descriptions and unsure of a term, go to the page it points to and look at the pictures to learn what they means by that term.
9. Newcomb’s editions over the years are all basically the same despite the changes of the front cover. The only changes are a slight difference with the first and last pages. So every edition can be used together (this is important when purchasing copies for a class).