

## BOOK REVIEW

**A Textbook of Economic Botany.** A.V.S.S. Samba Murty and N.S. Subrahmanyam. New Delhi, India: Wiley Eastern Limited. 1989. 875 pp. illus. Rs 90.00 (U.S. \$5.50). ISBN 0-85226-880-7.

This is more than a textbook but just short of an encyclopedic reference to the major economic plants of the world. Emphasis is understandably directed toward the needs of the Indian student at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, but the important species and varieties grown elsewhere are not neglected.

Twenty-five chapters cover the usual gamut of economic crops: cereals, millets, legumes, oil seeds, fibers, lumber, tuber crops, condiments, drug plants and so on; antibiotics and useful microorganisms are also included. Of interest to plant scientists well beyond the University student level are data supplied for each species considered: botanical names, English and local Indian names, origin and distribution (according to Vavilov), ecology, cultivation, soil requirements, processing of the raw material where appropriate, yields/hectare, chromosome numbers, chemical structures when relevant, insect pests, diseases and their management, as well as tables giving Indian and world production.

The book is illustrated with black-and-white photographs, line drawings and maps to add to an understanding of the text. Seven appendices list biochemical tests for major nutritional constituents, Indian research institutes involved in Economic Botany, a table of units used in the text, a list of ornamental plants, Vavilov's grouping of plants according to center of origin and distribution, chromosome numbers, a glossary of terms, and, finally, a comprehensive bibliography and index.

All of this comes at some expense to the reader: misspellings and typographical errors are common; many of the chemical structures are incorrectly rendered; punctuation and syntax leave much to be desired. But the reader interested in one or another of the many aspects of Economic Botany may wish to overlook these deficiencies in return for a wealth of information at an unbelievably modest price.

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