

## BOOK REVIEW

**Plants for People.** Anna Lewington. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Pp. vii, 232. \$40.00 (hardbound). ISBN 0-19-520840-4.

With the welcome proliferation of economic botany courses in junior colleges and extension courses, there is a need for nontechnical books. *Plants for People* in many ways answers this need. With its friendly, conversational language its presentation succeeds in reaching the nontechnical reader yet it offers reliable data necessary for a broad understanding of people's dependence upon useful plants. There is, in addition, much material that frequently will be of value to the trained botanist who undertakes to teach economic botany but whose specialties in the plant sciences may be unrelated to mankind's utilitarian interests in the world's vegetation.

The book is organized into seven sections:

1. Starting the Day (soaps and cosmetics in general). An interesting technique is seen in the discussion of cosmetic color: a cosmetician painting a girl's lips on one page and a South American Indian whose face is completely painted with achiote on the next page. This kind of fascinating comparative illustrative presentation is common in the book and is used very effectively.
2. Keeping Us Covered. This section concerns primarily fiber, dyeing and printing, and various parts of clothing.
3. From First Foods to Fast Foods discusses an interesting variety of material which can be taken into the stomach, from our major food plants to Amazonian cow trees, coffee and tea, plant foods for different peoples (rain forest and desert dwellers), and ending with future foods.
4. House and Home—Plants that Protect Us. This section concerns various wood, thatch, rattan and sundry stems for furniture and wickerware, linoleum, bamboo, and even plant materials used in rain forest dwellings.
5. Your Very Good Health—Plants that Cure Us treats many species valuable for a wide spectrum of ills and discusses plants from the family medicine chest, medicines in the hospital, and the rain forest pharmacy.
6. Getting Around—Plants that Transport Us spans a broad consideration from rubber in its numerous uses, tree trunks and reeds for boats and canoes, construction of docks, and plants for future fuel.
7. Recreation—Plants that Entertain Us includes paper for words and pictures, papyrus, wood pulp, plants for inks and dyes, the camera and plants, and plants in musical instruments.

This list is far from a complete enumeration of the incredible types of employment that the Plant Kingdom offers and that are discussed in these seven sec-

tions. One very interesting section that might well have been added is Plants in Religion—the psychoactive species used in traditional societies in many regions and which are considered to be sacred or semisacred, a very significant aspect of aboriginal culture.

Another outstanding feature that makes this volume a special value in teaching is the ingenious selection of illustrations, all in color, that span from the purely botanical to people, products, methods, and instruments of use, temperate woodlands, tropical rain forests, agricultural fields, and many other aspects of plants and their value to mankind.

There is a comprehensive index followed by author's acknowledgements and picture credits.

I must congratulate the author for her ingenuity and originality and the Oxford University Press for such a beautiful publication. It is indeed going to be a success as well as a stimulus to the teaching of economic botany.

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