

Wilson Popenoe: Agricultural Explorer, Educator and Friend of Latin America.

Frederic Rosengarten, Jr. Lawai, Kauai, Hawaii: National Tropical Botanical Garden, 1992. Pp. viii, 182. \$22.95. ISBN 0-935-86853-4.

Frederic Rosengarten, a widely known author, has given us a very personal and complete story of the life and work of one of the great masters of agricultural exploration of this century: Wilson Popenoe. The authenticity of this extraordinarily detailed disquisition is assured, since Rosengarten was a personal friend for many years of Wilson Popenoe, and Rosengarten himself spent most of his life in plantation work and management in Central America with plants introduced from abroad; furthermore, he is an accomplished author of several successful botanical books including *The Book of Spices* and *The Book of Edible Nuts*.

Wilson Popenoe was endeared to the tropics from his early years of residence in Costa Rica. During his youth, he divided his time between school and working in gardening and horticulture: he said that he spent more time propagating plants than burning the midnight oil studying. As to be expected, he excelled in the natural sciences but did not do well in other subjects. The rest of Popenoe's outstanding and really pioneering life was eventually with the United States Department of Agriculture. While his travels and studies on the introduction of new economic crop plants or local variants of those already established took him to many parts of the world, particularly Indonesia, his "first love" and major interest was with Latin America.

This book is a meritorious treasure, providing not only an account of the lifelong dedication of Wilson Popenoe but also an historical resumé of much of the

work accomplished by him in the study and introduction to cultivation of many tropical plants and their variants. Today, how many of us appreciate the results of his work, when we purchase and daily eat so many exotic plants and plant products?

The book will command a broad audience—not only of economic botanists, agronomists and ethnobotanists but of scholars in many aspects of Latin American history, development and commerce as well as conservationists, particularly to specialists in biological diversity.

Rosengarten has divided the book into 13 sections: 1) Early years, 2) Brazil: the Navel Orange; 3) Florida and Cuba: the Mango; 4) Guatemala: the Avocado; 5) Mexico and Washington: *Manual of Tropical and Sub-tropical Fruits*; 6) Costa Rica and Colombia; 7) Ecuador, Peru and Chile; 8) Washington: Marriage to Dorothy Hughes; 9) Lancetilla, Honduras: United Fruit Company; 10) Antigua, Guatemala: Casa Popenoe; Guatemala: Cinchona; Zamorano, Honduras: Escuela Agricola Panamericana; 13) Retirement years.

There follows a list of Popenoe's principal publications (1911–1917), a bibliography of references and an index.

The time for an eulogium of Wilson Popenoe is long overdue, for he died in 1975. His nearly life-long friend, Frederic Rosengarten, has fortunately filled in this lack in our bibliography of economic botany.

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