

BOOK REVIEW

Cultivation and Utilization of Medicinal Plants:
 Edited by C. K. Atal and B. M. Kapur, Regional
 Research Laboratory (CSIR), Jammu-Tawi, 1982;
 Pages 877; Price: Rs. 100.00; \$35, £16.

The Flora of India which is surpassed only by Brazil in the world abounds in a variety of medicinal plants. Naturally, a lot of research work under various disciplines is in progress. To collate the information on the research work carried out, many workshops, seminars and symposia are held periodically by various organisations. The present book is the outcome of the papers presented at the Cultivation and Utilization of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants symposium sponsored by the Regional Research Laboratory, Jammu in 1976. Some selected papers of both medicinal and aromatic plants were published in a single volume in 1977. To accommodate more papers presented in the symposium and also to up-date the information, the original book is now divided and published under two titles; one for Medicinal Plants and the other for Aromatic Plants exclusively.

The book on Medicinal Plants includes an aptly written foreword by Dr. M. S. Swaminathan. The contents are divided into various topics under the heads: (1) General, (2) Medicinal Plants, (3) Products used as additives in medicines, (4) Ethno-botany, (5) Marine products, (6) Insecticidal, (7) Related aspects of medicinal plants cultivation and (8) Miscellaneous.

Under the topic General, three review papers are dealt with; under Medicinal plants, steroids with 6 papers, Alkaloidal with papers on Poppy (4 papers), Ergot (2), Cinchona (3), Tropane alkaloidal (3), Gloriosa (1), Periwinkle (2), Rauwolfia (1), Ipecac (1); under Coumarins (3); Flavonoids includes papers on Rutin (3), Catechu and Catechin (1), Glycosides (2), Polyterpenoids (1), Cathartics (2), Adaptogen (1), others (3); under the chapter Products used as Additives in Medicines, subjects like Dyes (1), Carbohydrates (2), Oils and fats (2), Activated carbon (1) are included; Ethnobotany chapter includes (a) Drugs used in Indian systems in medicines (4) and (b) Ethnobotanical (3); Marine products have papers on bio-dynamic agents and Agar-agar (1); The chapter insecticidal includes (a) Plants product for insect control (1); (b) Tobacco (1), (c) Neem (1) and (d) Pyrethrum (3); the chapter on related aspects of medicinal plants cultivation throws light on (a) Diseases, Insect pests and Weeds (3), (b) Propagation (2), (c) Improvement (1) and (d) Problems in

cultivation (1) while the chapter on miscellaneous deals with subjects on (a) Assessment and management of wild sources of medicinal and aromatic plants (2), (b) Export potential (1) and (c) Tissue-culture (1).

The above 74 papers in total are all written by scholars working in the field; the papers are either in the form of reviews or represent the results of the scientific investigations carried out by the authors. The range of papers covers almost all aspects like history, ecology, ethnobotany, survey, cultivation and utilization, commercial prospects including export potential, diseases, new sources, phyto-chemistry, utilitarian aspects, biodynamics, finally culminating in tissue culture. Every paper is written with utmost care and deals with the respective subject in detail. The editors have taken pains to scrutinize the papers thoroughly and arrange them under the appropriate heads as far as possible. The book is a revised edition which normally should have included all the papers in the first edition, in addition to the new ones. Unfortunately it is observed that 27 papers included in the first edition have not found a place in this revised edition. While most of the chapters provide adequate information on the research work carried out, it is felt that the information provided under the chapter Ethnobotany which includes papers on Indian Systems in Medicine is too inadequate, particularly in the wake of much research work carried out in Ayurveda and other Indian systems of medicine and also on medico-ethnobotany by organisations like the Central Councils for Research in Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy especially in the last decade.

The book will be of much use to research workers and others interested in the various aspects of medicinal plants and hence should definitely find a place in all Laboratories, Institutions and Libraries. The price of the book being very reasonable is well within the reach of the individuals interested in the field.

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