

Book Reviews

J.N. Wintgens (Ed.), *Coffee: Growing, Processing, Sustainable Production*, Weinheim, Germany: Wiley–VCH, 2004, xl + 976 pp., £205.00, ISBN 3-527-30731-1

This volume begins with the history of the coffee tree and of coffee, which is closely related to the growth of great empires and trade, first under the influence of the Arabs at the end of the first millennium, then the Turks in the 15th century, and finally, European colonisers since the 18th century.

In the growing of the coffee crop, two main species of coffee tree are cultivated on a worldwide scale, namely *Coffea arabica* and *C. canephora* var. *robusta*. However, the taxonomic classification of the genus *Coffea* has become increasingly complex due to many new species discovered in West Africa, Central Africa, Madagascar and East Africa.

Initially, potential productivity depends on the variety or the clone selected. Development, however, can only be favourable if the new plants adapt well to local agroclimatic conditions, if they are resistant to local parasites, and if the cultivation methods chosen are adapted to the variety in question.

As a result of increasing demand for coffee and associated rising prices paid for the crop, the incentive to exploit every avenue for increasing coffee yields was extensively developed. This volume also explains the most serious consequences of the drop in coffee prices, due to the economic crisis occurring between 1997 and 2002, where coffee growers lost money on their activity. Coffee farmer have to choose between maximising yields of lower quality coffee, which may prove unsuitable in the long term, ultimately causing damage to the environment, and accepting ‘Sustainable Production’ with lower yields using environmentally friendly cultivation practices which involve lower input levels.

This is an interesting volume providing detailed information on the origin of such luxury products and the main problems requiring resolution for their market sustenance. It is an essential guidebook for coffee growers, processors, traders, and researchers.

John F. Kennedy
Rocío Martín Alanís

Chembiotech Laboratories, Institute of Research & Development, University of Birmingham Research Park, Birmingham B15 2Q1, UK

Available online 5 July 2005

M. Wichtl (Ed.), *Herbal Drugs and Phytopharmaceuticals*, Third Edition, Medpharm Scientific Publishers, Stuttgart, Germany, 2004 (xliii + 704 pp., \$223.96, ISBN 3-88763-100-5; CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, USA (ISBN 0-8493-1961-7).

The medicinal use of plant parts is an ancient practice, and the use of herbal teas is primarily empirical. Historically, most drugs were plant-based with the exception of a few, which came from animal and mineral sources. Synthetic drugs first appeared on the market at the end of the 19th century. Despite tremendous progress in the development of new synthetic drugs during the 20th century, plant-based drugs have never totally lost their importance in the treatment of illnesses. The pharmaceutical industry and academic institutions have made considerable contributions to progress in medicinal plant research. Even though plant-based remedies have special legal status in many countries, they can in many cases be considered equal to synthetic drugs in terms of their quality, safety and efficacy standards.

This book contains monographs on 212 herbal drugs that are used either for the preparation of teas or as components of herbal mixtures, and some that are used frequently or exclusively as raw materials for the production of phytopharmaceuticals. The heading of each monograph contains both Latin and English names and the pharmacopoeias in which the drug is officially cited. The alphabetical listing is based on the Latin name. The individual monographs are clearly organised and contain the following sections: illustrations and descriptions, pharmacopoeia names (German standard licenses), plant source, synonyms, origin, constituents, indications, side effects, making the tea, German standard license, tea preparations, phytomedicines, authentication, TLC identification, adulteration, storage and associated literature. Every monograph in this book includes a section entitled ‘Tea Preparations’ wherein the reader will find information regarding the typical delivery forms of herbal drugs and herbal tea formulas found in the European pharmacy.

In conclusion, this is a monograph for herbal tea formulas, and is highly recommended to all individuals with interests in herbal drugs used for tea preparation and in the production of phytopharmaceuticals.

Rocío Martín Alanís
John F. Kennedy*

*Chembiotech Laboratories,
Institute of Research & Development,
University of Birmingham Research Park,
Birmingham B15 2Q2, UK*