

Book reviews

***Practical Polyphenolics: From Structure to Molecular Recognition and Physiological Action*, Edwin Haslam. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, xv + 422 pages, ISBN 0-521-46513-3, £60.00, US\$100.00**

Plant polyphenols are of significance in a wide range of areas in the biological sciences. The relevance of this class of compounds to flower, fruit, and beverage pigmentation, tanning of leather, physiological effects of food and drink, taste and flavour, and dental decay are discussed in this book. Studies of polyphenols have progressed with contributions from scientists in many disciplines, and the author has succeeded in writing a scientific text that approaches the subject from a chemist's point of view but clearly describes the significance of the chemistry to the properties and biological effects of this class of compounds.

The book comprises nine chapters, which cover structure and biosynthesis of polyphenols; molecular recognition; taste, bitterness and astringency; maturation and changes in astringency; anthocyanin copigmentation in fruit and flowers; herbal medicines; quinone tanning and oxidative polymerisation; and collagen and leather.

The book is written in a lively and erudite style that demonstrates the author's passion for, and expertise in, the subject. Quotation of passages from scientific literature of historic importance or from the wider non-scientific literature helps to sustain the reader's interest. For example, the chapter covering molecular recognition

begins with a passage from *Small World* by David Lodge, which allows the author to draw an analogy between molecules and attraction between the sexes. The strength of molecular interactions due to the additive effects of many weak hydrogen bonds is illustrated by a drawing from *Gulliver's Travels*, in which many weak fibres together constrain Gulliver. Although this approach is unusual for scientific texts, the science is rigorous and well-described, and the style of writing is a refreshing and successful way of communicating to scientific readers. The lively writing style is supported by clear and precise chemical structures and formulae.

The fondness of the author for leading scientists who have contributed to the development of the subject is clearly illustrated in his personal memoir to E.C. Bate-Smith, which is included in the introduction. Each chapter is well-referenced and I was unable to spot any errors in the book.

Overall this is an interesting and informative book that will be an essential purchase for scientists interested in polyphenols, whether they be biologists, chemists, food scientists, bioscientists, nutritionists or agricultural scientists.

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***Color for Science, Art and Industry*, K. Nassau (Ed). Elsevier Science B.V., Amsterdam, 1998, ISBN 0-444-89846-8, US\$132.00**

This book on colour science, art and technology should interest a wide readership. It attempts to cover many topics and, in the main, does so successfully. Although it might be thought that with such a wide range of subject material the topics would be treated in a superficial manner, they certainly are not. For those already familiar with some of the many aspect of the sci-

ence of colour application, the book will provide insights into unfamiliar areas whereas, for those whose knowledge of the topic is scanty, the book should provide a valuable entry into the subject. As with any book that is a compilation of chapters from a variety of authors, there is a variety of styles but not a great deal of overlap among the authors. The editor, who is also author of four of the chapters, has made a good choice in his selection of co-authors and subject matter to produce an intriguing book with the objective of linking science, art and technology. The book is divided into three sections — the science of