

## BOOK REVIEW

*Anthony Longhetti*,<sup>1</sup> B.A.

### Review of *Identification of Vegetable Fibers*

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**REFERENCE:** Catling, D. and Grayson, J., *Identification of Vegetable Fibers*, Chapman and Hall Ltd., London, 1982, 89 pages, \$27.50 hardcover.

Though titled *Identification of Vegetable Fibers*, this book instead covers the identification of vegetable plants from an examination of the stems and leaves. The vegetable fibers included are limited to flax, hemp, sunn hemp, ramie, jute, kenaf, roselle, sisal and abaca; that is, fibers most commonly used in the manufacture of rope and cordage. Excluded are such commonly occurring textile fibers as cotton and linen.

Overall, this brief volume is a good compilation of information and techniques useful in the identification of vegetable plants by examination of the stem and leaf cross sections. However, its use for the practicing forensic scientist is limited by several deficiencies. For example:

- The cross-sectional diagrams of the stems and leaves are well drawn; however, accompanying photomicrographs would make them more informative.
- Polarized light photomicrographs, rather than phase contrast, would provide greater detail.
- Only two of the fibers are illustrated in the low-power photomicrographs.
- Though several categories are covered for each fiber, (that is, lumen and cell wall, crystals, dislocations, and markings), there is no chart summarizing this data for all types of fibers. For example, Table 5 covers only hemp, flax, sunn hemp, and ramie.

Nonetheless, *Identification of Vegetable Fibers* should be a useful reference volume for forensic science laboratories that have occasional need to identify vegetable plants. It may also be valuable for its presentation of techniques for the identification of stem and leaf cross sections, as these are techniques that can be extended to the identification of plants in general.

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