

the series, and departmental libraries should make every effort to acquire it.

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Chemistry of the Amazon: Biodiversity, Natural Products, and Environmental Issues. Edited by Peter Rudolph Seidl, Otto Richard Gottlieb, and Maria Auxiliadora Coelho Kaplan. American Chemical Society Symposium Series 588, Washington, DC. 1995. xii + 315 pp. 15 × 22.5 cm. \$89.95. ISBN 0-9412-3159-1.

In November 1993, shortly after the Rio Summit of 1992, the First International Symposium on Chemistry of the Amazon was held in Manaus, Brazil, under the joint sponsorship of the Associação Brasileira de Química, the American Chemical Society, the Centro de Tecnologia Mineral, and the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazonia. *Chemistry of the Amazon: Biodiversity, Natural Products, and Environmental Issues*, provides an account of this Symposium.

Since the Brazilian Amazon accounts for just over 30% of the earth's tropical rainforests, this region is a uniquely important biological resource. Unfortunately, it is also a resource under enormous external pressure. Estimates of losses of the Amazonian tropical forest due to deforestation range from a very conservative 8% (40 million ha) to upwards of 12%. One important purpose of the International Symposium was to develop an understanding of how chemistry might contribute to the preservation of Amazonian biodiversity.

The range of subjects included in this multiauthored, 300-page volume is enormous. Included in its 22 chapters are thoughtful overviews of the potential for the discovery, among Amazonian natural products, of new drugs and agrochemicals, somewhat less exciting discussions of chemotaxonomy, detailed accounts of various specialized areas of natural products chemistry (ranging from terpenes to lignans and proteins), and discussions of some extremely serious environmental problems. There are clear expositions of the devastation resulting from slash-and-burn agriculture and from the aggressive expansion of the lucrative timber industry. One chapter is devoted to a careful description of the disastrous consequences of unregulated gold mining activities. This uncontrolled and highly decentralized mining activity is responsible for discharging over 100 tons of mercury into the environment annually!

It is as difficult to summarize the contents of this brief symposium volume as it would be to describe the Amazonian area itself in a few words. However, any chemist with even a casual interest in the opportunities and the problems that are connected with studying and learning from the world's largest biodiversity resource would do well to

read this very important account of the many ways that chemistry plays a crucial role in Amazonia.

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Potions, Poisons, and Panaceas: An Ethnobotanical Study of Montserrat. By David Eric Brussell (Southern Illinois University). Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, IL. 1998. xvi + 176 pp. 22.5 × 17.5 cm. \$69.95. ISBN: 0-8093-1552-1.

Should I ever visit the small island of Montserrat, I will surely take this small book with me. It is a concise catalog of 282 ethnobotanically important plants from the island, estimated population ca. 12 000 people. Of the species covered in the book, 207 (73%) are medicinal, 123 (44%) are used for food, 49 (17%) are poisonous, 41 (15%) are a source of wood, 27 (10%) are associated with voodoo and folklore, 14 (5%) are sources of fiber, 9 (3%) are utilized for production of dyes, 8 (3%) are employed as aphrodisiacs, and 32 (11%) have various, miscellaneous uses that include use as hallucinogens, aromatics, insect repellents, ornaments, brooms, and teeth-cleaning agents. Kapok from the silkcotton tree, *Ceiba pentandra*, for example, is used locally to stuff voodoo dolls and placed over the front door as a protective charm when the occupants leave. The wood is used to make dugouts. Some of the nonuseful species are tabulated in the appendix where the author lists the dates and places of collection for his 378 collections on the island.

In Hawaii, fruits of the pantropical shrub known as Noni (*Morinda citrifolia*) are being harvested for a developing commercial medicinal market in the U.S. The *Morinda* account is thus included below to show typical coverage for a species:

***Morinda citrifolia* L.; Hog Apple, Painkiller, Chiddle Grape.** This small tree has opposite elliptic leaves, white tubular flowers in balls, and large whitish-green multiple fruits that have an odor similar to limburger cheese. It is native to India. Specimens were collected on St. George's Hill and at Blackburn Airport near Trants. Brussell C-269, C-311. The crushed or heat-wilted leaves are used topically to relieve pain and as poultices for boils, bruises, and wounds. The immature macerated fruits are mixed with salt, and the resulting paste is applied topically to areas around broken bones. Juice from the root is applied externally to treat skin eruptions. Tea made from the leaves and bark is drunk as a tonic. The odoriferous fruits are edible.

While I appreciate the hard copy of the book, I think that a smaller pocket-sized edition would have been more practical, at least for those lucky enough to visit the island. There are 52 photographs, 24 in color, the remainder black