

Book Reviews

Fortschritte der Chemie Organischer Naturstoffe: Progress in the Chemistry of Organic Natural Products, Volume 83. The Naturally Occurring Coumarins. R. D. H. Murray (University of Glasgow, Scotland). Edited by W. Herz (Florida State University), H. Falk (Johannes-Kepler Universität), G. W. Kirby (University of Glasgow), and R. E. Moore (University of Hawai at Manoa). Springer-Verlag, Wien and New York. 2002. vii + 673 pp. 15 × 23 cm. EUR 220. ISBN 3-211-83601-2.

Volume 83 of the splendid book review series "Fortschritte" is devoted entirely to a meticulously produced update on the naturally occurring coumarins by R. D. H. Murray, a world leader in this field. This is actually the fourth contribution this author has made on the same topic in this book series, with the others appearing in 1978, 1991, and 1997. The book provides a listing of each natural coumarin from the first discovery of members of this compound class in the early nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. Altogether, 1785 monomeric coumarins, 77 biscoumarins, and four triscoumarins are listed in the book. There is a large structural diversity evident in modifications of the five-carbon prenyl moiety present in many of the coumarins. Since 1997, 214 monocoumarins and 17 biscoumarins have been reported. Also, there has been much recent interest in the synthesis of calanolide A, a promising compound with anti-HIV activity, which was featured on the cover of the *Journal of Natural Products* in the first half of 2002.

The bulk of the book is occupied by 36 tables listing the presently known monomeric coumarins, biscoumarins, and

triscoumarins. There is also a final table of coumarins that according to the author require structural revision. For each individual coumarin tabulated, there are a structural code, the trivial name, the year in which the compound was first reported, the structure (with full stereochemistry), the elemental formula, the melting point, the optical rotation (if any) and solvent, the natural source(s), and relevant reference(s). There are also four indices (elemental formula, trivial name, author, and subject) and a total of 1954 reference citations. All in all, phytochemists and other natural product researchers having access to this book should be able to identify any known coumarin isolated in their work in the most expeditious fashion if they have access to this volume.

What makes this book so special is the magnificent attention to detail by the author, its ease of use, and the high quality of its production by the publishers. It really is a pleasure to handle, and its elegant appeal could never be satisfactorily replaced by an electronic version. This is an essential resource for the libraries of all institutions where natural products research is conducted, for which its purchase can be recommended with great confidence.

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