

*Phytochemistry*, 1976, Vol. 15, p. 851. Pergamon Press. Printed in England.

**Specialist Periodical Reports—Terpenoids and Steroids, Vol. 5** Senior Reporter: K. H. OVERTON pp. 390 £21.00.  
**The Alkaloids, Vol. 5** Senior Reporter: J. E. SAXTON pp. 303 £17.50. The Chemical Society, London.

These volumes cover the literature from mid-1973 to mid-1974 with the usual comprehensiveness that one has come to expect from all the volumes in the various series of Specialist Periodical Reports. The only problem nowadays that has to be solved is to try and produce these extremely useful compendia, if possible, at a slightly lower price. I am not carping, since I realise that the volumes are somewhat ephemeral and because of the high quality of their production and limited distribution

are expectedly expensive. But would it be possible for the Chemical Society to consider them as I do? A repository of rich knowledge from which the seedcorns of future research can be obtained for many years to come. If so, they should be provided with an adequate subject index and perhaps be rethought in terms of coverage. For example, would it not be better to deal with a single class of terpenoids and steroids over, let us say, 5 years, rather than attempt to do an "annual report" on each and every class. Anyway, I for one hope that the series does not founder on the rocks of inflation, and congratulate Professor Overton and Dr. Saxton and their colleagues once more for their continued hard work.

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**Photoperiodism in Plants.** DAPHNE VINCE-PRUE. McGraw-Hill Book Company (UK) Ltd., 1975 pp. 444. £9.95.

This volume gives a reasonably up-to-date history of the physiological concepts of photoperiodism in plants. It does not deal with the biochemical aspects of photoperiodism in full, although these are mentioned and referenced where appropriate, nor is there any real discussion regarding the possibility of photoresponse being due to

pigments other than phytochrome. So if your prime interest is in day length, red light and vernalisation, this is the book for you. If, however, you want to look at the many diverse, and sometimes bizarre, explanations which have been put forward regarding the interactions of light, gibberellins, or what you will, you should still peruse it, since it will give you an essential background of physiological observation which biochemistry, so far, has singularly failed to explain.

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**Plant Physiology.** DIETER HESS. Springer-Verlag, New York. pp. 333. \$14.80.

In spite of the large number of books dealing with plant physiology which have appeared during the last few years, few deal with the subject in a relatively comprehensive way. Most ignore those aspects of biochemistry peculiar to plants, and often deal with plant growth and development from a merely descriptive point of view.

This volume, in my opinion, overcomes these drawbacks but, unfortunately, has so many typographical errors that one cannot thoroughly recommend it to the beginning student. The errors mainly occur in the formulae; for example in the insertion of double bonds in the biosynthesis of carotenoids (p. 114) and in the structure

of an anthocyanidin (p. 134), but there are numerous errors of spelling which sometimes makes it difficult for the beginner to follow the arguments. (I personally counted 50 major errors without really looking for them). It is to be hoped, therefore, that the publishers will take the initiative in having the whole book properly re-read and ensure that future copies are sent out with all the present errors corrected. When this is done I feel sure that it will prove an acceptable textbook for first-year students of the plant sciences, and provide adequate background reading for other biologists. The translation has been carried out well, and the concept of the book is too good to allow it to sink under the waves of inaccuracy.

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