

BOOK REVIEW

The Life of the Green Plant: by A. W. GALSTON, P. J. DAVIES and R. L. SATTER. 3rd edn. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, U.S.A., 1980.

This third edition of the book, originally solely authored by Galston, is a complete departure from its predecessors. Those were written in the heyday of the belief in the U.S.A. that University courses could be based on a series of mini-texts that 'permit each teacher to determine the level and structure of his (sic!) own course' (preface to original edition). Now the tide has turned and students and instructors appear to want 'complete' texts which can be used for a semester (or two). This realisation is shown by the authors' preface to this volume. However, I am not sure that they have achieved this even though the number of pages has been quadrupled. To be sure the text is lucid, as is expected from the three distinguished authors, but here and there is a sense of *précis* instead of an in-depth treatment which, in my opinion, will leave the tyro wallowing in desperation.

This is demonstrated most cogently by considering the series of excellent questions which the authors provide at the end of each chapter. From the information provided in the text, very few of these could be answered by more than a one-liner! Of course the authors supply references to a

series of more informative books and articles which are reasonably up-to-date and useful, but I imagine that few departmental libraries will have more than a handful of these.

However, the authors are to be congratulated on the presentation of those chapters (9–13) which deal with their own expertise. These 140 pages deal with the control of plant growth and development via hormones, light and temperature, and their treatment is far superior to that of the majority of other plant physiology texts today. The authors can also be praised for introducing students to the chemical aspects of *in vivo* plant protection, to newer methods of plant breeding via protoplasts, plasmids and so on, as well as discussing other important new agricultural and horticultural practices.

So what is the overall recommendation? Well, this book may be as a good supplementary text for most *full* courses in plant physiology and useful in shorter courses as an assigned text. But I doubt that it could be more than that. I certainly recommend it for libraries and hope that the next edition is more complete, so that it can be used on its own for a full course.

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