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**Book Reviews**

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**Encke, F.: Kübelpflanzen.** Geschichte, Herkunft, Pflege. Stuttgart: Ulmer 1982. 207 pp., 93 figs. Hard bound DM 68,—.

The author, former director of the Frankfurt Palm-Gardens, is famed for his book on roof gardens and terraces. He now directs his interest to plants in pots, a way of gardening which has a long tradition in the old world. Anybody who has ever visited the Mediterranean knows the elegance Italian gardeners, professional as well as amateur, demonstrate in keeping garden plants in a minimal space, the micro environment of pots. I will never forget the experience of an Italian roof garden in a Neopolitan house on the hill side of the Vomero, a garden consisting exclusively of plants cultivated for generations in pots of earthenware, porcelain, wood and sheet-iron from olive oil tins. It was nearly a sacral event when the landlord every evening took care of sprinkling water, taking into consideration the specific requirements of each species. And there were many species. This romance of pot plant gardening is found in Encke's excellent illuminated book. It treats the history of the introduction of pot plants. In effect pot plant gardening in the northern hemisphere brings the tropics, or at least the mediterranean atmosphere, for a short time in the year into the human environment of

daily life. Another part of pot gardening development was difficult: overwintering for protection in closed rooms that were often even artificially heated; pot plants thus became orangery plants. This made them precious and a sign of the special devotion of the owner.

Encke shows how everybody can become a fan of pot plants: he describes nursing and cultivation in great details for more than 250 species. No interesting varieties are forgotten, from oranges and oleander to laurel, palms, carob, Fuchsia, bamboo and fruit trees – all maintained in movable pots. So the book will not only give instructions for beginners, but also contribute to intensification of pot plant cultures, which have become so important for decoration of the concrete groves of the modern towns.

It remains however strange that plant breeding has not yet viewed the pot plant as a special object for improvement! There should be interesting, promising perspectives in crossing and selection of plants, decorative and nutritive ones, for the limited root system environments they have to have in the pots. Another field for specialists among breeders, who are looking for new niches in the field of breeding!

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