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Book Review

Classification of East African Crops. John O. Kokwaro. 90 pp. illus. Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kenya, 1979. US\$6.00.

The author, an outstanding botanist and a professor at the University of Nairobi, correctly points out that in “most of the learning institutions of East Africa, people always have problems of identifying plants growing in their gardens, farms and compounds” and that he hopes “that this book will solve many of the puzzling questions connected with English, Trade or Botanical names of the economic plants in the area” He has presented in this book the basic tool towards this end: the enumeration of some 748 useful plants, cultivated and wild, with their technical names and common names (when known). The plants are arranged in two types of classes: (1) usage classification, in 19 categories (cereals, starch crops, root crops, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, oils and waxes, spices, pot herbs, beverages, stimulants, fibres, dyes and tannins, rubbers, gums and resins, insecticides and pesticides, timbers and ornamental trees, forages and fodders, and lawn grasses); and (2) commercial classification, in six categories (foods, cash crops, commercial horticultural crops, backyard crops, experimental crops, and forbidden plants). Each category has a brief introduction followed by a listing of the plants concerned: under “Starch Crops,” for example, the listing is divided into “Major Crops” (banana; cassava; plantain; potato; sweetpotato) and “Minor Crops” (breadfruit, jackfruit, coco yam, new coco yam, gourd, pumpkin, tannia, and yam).

Not only inhabitants and specialists in East Africa will value this book. It will be useful in botanical institutions around the world and of great utility to agronomists working in tropical areas of both hemispheres.

The volume, very reasonably priced in today’s market, is available from the Sales Manager, Kenya Literature Bureau, Box 30022, Nairobi, Kenya.

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