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Book Review

The Diversity of Crop Plants. J. G. Hawkes. 184 pp. illus. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983. $20.00

Professor Hawkes, one of the modern leaders in studies on the origin of cultivated plants, was invited to deliver the prestigious John M. Prather Lectures in Biology at Harvard University in 1977. This concise but inclusive volume is the result of the Prather Lecture of that year—a date marking the 100th anniversary of the teaching of economic botany at the University.

The scope of this series of lectures is wide; consideration of past accomplishments is balanced by evaluation of current research and challenged by brief but telling glimpses into future avenues of investigation. The volume is divided into seven chapters: "Nature of Cultivated Plants"; "Origins of Agriculture"; "Study of Crop Plant Evolution and Dispersal"; "Evidence of Crop Plant Diversity"; "Value of Diversity to the Breeder"; "Exploration and Storage of Crop Plant Diversity"; and "Global Strategies for Conserving and Utilizing the Genetic Heritage of Plants." There is an appendix concerning crop priorities, a list of abbreviations of 23 organizations devoted to investigation in cultivated plants, and a bibliography of 246 entries.

Hawkes' Prather Lectures will, in this published form, provide a most valuable stimulant to the teaching of economic botany and ethnobotany, branches of the plant sciences that are currently experiencing rapid expansion in our universities. They will furthermore help to impress researchers in the plant sciences of the value of the interdisciplinary approach and the dangers inherent in too strict a compartmentalization.

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