

relevant science library without being an essential purchase.

**John F. Kennedy**  
**David W. Taylor**

**Biodegradation: Natural and Synthetic Materials.** Edited by W.B. Betts, Springer-Verlag, London, 1991. xiii + 238 pp. ISBN 3-540-19705-2.

Within the last ten years public awareness, and hence public pressure concerning pollution, has vastly increased, and this pressure has been brought to bear on industry and governments alike. Environmental pollution is not now thought of as the norm for a successful technological society, but as an unacceptable alternative to clean processes. There has, therefore, been an increase in the utilization of biological methods to convert and to remedy these procedures, and to remove or convert hazardous chemicals into non-hazardous or recyclable products. Microorganisms play a major role in bioconversion and bioremediation and microbial conversion is now, very much, a growth

area and forms the basis of 'Biodegradation: Natural and Synthetic Materials'. The number of substrates available for biodegradation is vast, and so this volume shows us the most common and most important chemicals by way of an example. The reader should, therefore, get an idea of the approach, as opposed to having an exact method for a specific problem. Examples of the topics covered include: biodegradation of nitriles and cyanide, lignin degradation and degradation of haloaromatic compounds. There are also chapters on the use, structure and synthesis of lignocellulose.

This volume is essentially a collection of mostly unrelated papers under an 'umbrella' subject heading and there is little continuity between chapters. This is remedied a little, however, by the inclusion of an excellent index. This book is based upon the proceedings of an advanced study seminar held in York, UK. 'Biodegradation' would be an interesting library loan for anyone wishing to see an overview of the state of biodegradation knowledge but a decision on purchase should be reserved until then.

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