

New book

Alkaloids Nature's Curse or Blessing

Edited by Manfred Hesse, Verlag Helvetica Chimica Acta, Zurich, and Wiley-VCH, Weinheim, 2002. 414 pp.; £75

This is the English translation of a German previous version entitled 'Alkaloide-Fluch oder Segen der Nature?'.

The book is divided in 11 sections:

- 1) Introduction.
- 2) Classification of Alkaloids.
- 3) Structure elucidation of Alkaloids.
- 4) Artefacts.
- 5) Chiroptical Properties of Alkaloids.
- 6) Alkaloids Synthesis.
- 7) Alkaloids and Chemotaxonomy.
- 8) Aspects of Alkaloid Biogenesis.
- 9) Biological Significance of Alkaloids.
- 10) Historical Aspects of Alkaloid Chemistry.

- 11) Active Principles from Selected Alkaloid Sources and Their Cultural and Historical Significance.

An index is provided.

All the aspects of Alkaloid Chemistry are evoked and their interest in pharmacology is pointed out. A special development is made on the interesting question (section 9): 'Why do organisms produce alkaloids?' Many replies are suggested: protection against fungi, bacteria or UV irradiation, defense for the plants against herbivores etc. ... Evidence is given that 'alkaloids are not just some waste products of nature'.

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