



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Concise Encyclopedia Biochemistry and Molecular Biology**, revised by T. A. SCOTT and E. I. MERCER, 3rd edition, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1997, 737 pp., DM 168. ISBN 3-11-014535-9.

The striking feature of this encyclopedia to a phytochemical reviewer is the very generous number of entries dealing with plant biochemistry, especially comparative aspects. Isoflavonoids, alkaloids and tannins are all treated in some detail. In fact, there is a good balance between microbial, plant and animal

metabolism. In this third edition, a number of entries have been rewritten, e.g. those on photosynthesis and steroids. There are several new entries, including one on prions (shades of the BSE scare) and another on protein engineering. On the whole, this is a highly recommendable publication. It is a shame that the high price means that it will only be affordable for libraries.

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**Chinese Drug Monographs and Analysis**, H. Wagner and R. Bauer, Verlag für Ganzheitliche Medizin, Kötzing, 1996, Each monograph 1–12 pp., DM 39. ISSN 1430-8290.

The first four monographs in this new series on Chinese medicinal plants are devoted to *Bupleurum* roots, *Fritillaria* bulbs, *Rehmannia* roots and *Schisandra* fruits. They have been produced by the collaborative efforts of Professor Wagner in Munich with Chinese medicinal plant experts. Each monograph has a colour plate on the cover illustrating the chosen plant and there is a description of the drug and its medicinal use. The major chemical constituents are indicated with their formulae and the pharmacology of the plant is summarised. Keys to drug identification

are then provided with both TLC and HPLC fingerprints. The HPLC traces are accompanied by the UV spectra of the components that have been separated. Finally, there are a few comments on which components are most useful in drug identification and references to the original literature are provided.

Eventually, it is planned to produce between 100 and 150 of these monographs. These first four are attractively produced and appear to be accurate phytochemically. They will provide a certain method of identifying Chinese drug plants and the series will be valuable to pharmacognosists and plant druggists prescribing these curative extracts.

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