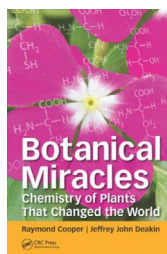


Raymond Cooper and Jeffrey John Deakin: Botanical Miracles: Chemistry of Plants That Changed the World

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Bibliography

Botanical Miracles: Chemistry of Plants That Changed the World
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This book was partly designed to be used as a textbook, although its subject matter straddles the areas of ethnobotany and chemistry with an emphasis on the active ingredients of familiar natural products, crops, and medicines. Each chapter concludes with a series of questions which might be used for classwork, and special topics are highlighted in the text by means of background shading. Following introductory chapters on foods and medicines, the next few chapters cover topics according to their uses, including beverages, euphorics, “exotic potions” (such as myrrh and lavender), and finally plant dyes and pigments.

The text is written in an engaging style and is remarkably comprehensive in its coverage. It focuses on interesting

and curious examples, such as Chinese Cordyceps which is obtained from moth caterpillars that have been infected with the fungus. On the other hand, the substance LSD is given only five lines plus a heading and a chemical formula diagram, perhaps because it was a chemist rather than a plant that first created the substance. Morphine, on the other hand, is given more than seven pages (including a section on Codeine), and is described as “one of nature’s great botanical miracles”. In the chapter on plant dyes, there is a section on ultraviolet absorption spectroscopy, and it also contains a highlighted section on Carbon Accounting and Carbon Neutrality. In this respect, as with many other topics, the book is bang up-to-date.

Although the book’s high price may deter some potential buyers, it represents good value in covering the topic in great detail (though the omission of Mat  from the section on teas was surprising). My copy was very tightly bound using the “perfect binding” method, possibly because the book was designed to be printed on demand. A less expensive e-book version is also available. As an accessible summary of natural product chemistry, it is exemplary.

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