Temperate and subtropical fruit production

This book is an updated version of the first edition that was published in 1986 and that was especially directed on New Zealand. In this new version, this orientation on New Zealand is abandoned, but essentially the structure of the book has remained unchanged. In Part 1, the first four short chapters (The distribution of fruits, Climatic conditions, Morphology and growth, Flowers and fruits) contain a short and rather simple review of the botanical aspects of the fruit plant. The following six chapters (Pruning and training, Production and marketing, Soils, nutrients and water, Crop protection, Propagation, Machinery) cover in usually much greater detail the more practical aspects of fruit production. In Part 2, in the nine chapters, the origin, distribution and cultivation of a broad spectrum of fruit species (stone fruit, pome fruits, grapes, berry fruit, citrus, kiwifruit, subtropical fruit, olives and some miscellaneous fruits, edible nuts) are described in some detail.

As indicated in the preface, the book is directed towards giving information to students, professional advisers, growers and the enthusiastic amateur. However, the book, for the greater part is, purely descriptive which is logical for Part 2 but not necessarily so for Part 1. The information given in the first part is rather superficial and especially in the botanical chapters, the treatment of the various subjects is too simple, even considering the fact that some subjects come up again in later chapters. I think that the reader who wants more depth and wants to know why the fruit plant behaves as it behaves will be disappointed. In my opinion, he would be served by a better balance between theory and practice. For, the practical aspects of fruit production (pruning and training; marketing; soils, nutrients, and water; crop protection; propagation, and finally, machinery) get much more attention. Especially, pruning and training are discussed in rather too much detail than required. The idea of the book is not to be an alternative for practical manuals and oral courses directed on one or two fruit species growing at the conditions of a special region or country. Therefore, e.g., giving exact dimensions of support assemblies and diameter of posts in a special figure to use for ordering from the merchant seems completely superfluous to me! The same
holds for a separate illustration of the construction to support the end post of training systems, a problem that every grower will solve in his own way.

In Part 2, this kind of trivialities are lacking. The subject matter is reviewed always in a similar manner, which makes finding something or comparing various fruits very easy. After a few remarks on origin, distribution and botanical name, under the heading ‘key points’ a number of important aspects on cultivation, storage, diseases, etc. are mentioned. The central part of each description is always a large table summarizing, for each fruit, particulars of botanical nature and on cultivation, climate, soil needed, pests, etc. In this way, the information is given very adequately, limited to essentials.

The book is written very clearly and is easy to read, in my opinion even, for people who are less familiar with the English language. Although a number of chapters is written by ‘quests’ the homogeneity in the various contributions is high. The spelling errors are minimum. The book is well illustrated by a large number of drawings that are simple and clear, and usually of good quality.

The same, however, does not hold for many of the photographs, which are too small and seem to be out of focus. It is a great pity that the excellent color-plates of fruits, as found in the first edition, are omitted, probably for reasons of cost. As is usual for this type of book, the list of references at the end of each chapter is restricted to a few books or reviews for ‘further reading’. A glossary of technical terms and a good index concludes the book.

In short, although a few critical remarks can be made, this book is a good introduction for those who want to get familiar with practical fruit growing in a quick way. In my opinion, especially the first part is too superficial and too practical for university students, but as a whole I hope, following the editors that ‘producers and practitioners will long value the book as an accurate and user-friendly reference’.

J. Tromp

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Plants in Action: Adaptation in Nature, Performance in Cultivation

Plants in Action is a textbook that provides basic plant biological knowledge and is aimed at upper level undergraduate students. The book has been a collective effort by members of plant science societies in Australia and New