Kitching, R. L. 1971. The Psyllidae of British Columbia with a key to species. J. Entomol. Soc. Brit. Columbia **68:** 36-43.

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Loginova (1972) (Commentat. Biol. Soc. Sic. Fenn. **47:** 1-37) has recently placed **Arytaina spartiophila** in a new genus **Arytainilla** Log.

Pendergast, C. 1971. *Introduction to Organic Gardening.* Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 167 pp., $2.50 in Canada.

Null, G. and Staff. 1972. *How to Grow Food Organically.* Leisure Books, Inc., New York, 278 pp., 95c.

Tyler, H. 1972. *Organic Gardening Without Poisons.* Pocket Books (Simon & Schuster), New York, 224 pp., $1.50.

Rodale, Robert, *Ed.* 1971. *The Basic Book of Organic Gardening.* Ballantyne Books, Inc., New York, 377 pp., $1.25.

Harrison, J. B. 1972. *Good Food Naturally.* J. J. Douglas Ltd., West Vancouver, 116 pp., $3.95.

As one who struggled for years to grow food in pre-DDT days, with indifferent success, I have a sceptic's interest in the current outbreak of books on organic gardening. Listing this randomly chosen quintet of paperbacks in my own ascending order of merit was a temptation not to be resisted.

The first is well printed and bound, carelessly proofread and without illustrations, which might even have improved it; they could scarcely have harmed it. The book exemplifies everything that is half-baked about the organic food movement. This is a pity because the movement is a logical and healthy reaction to the hard sell of over-refined and over-processed convenience foods, to careless and excessive use of chemicals, and less logically, to mass-produced, farm-factory foods.

Much is made here of the Grand Plan of Nature. This is never laid out in so many words, but the phrase is repeated over and over. Insects and insecticides are covered in 5 pages which confirm the superficiality of the author's knowledge. Some samples: the insect world numbers in the millions of species; there are 60,000 different types of pesticides; "It is an established fact that insects will attack an unhealthy plant before they will attack a healthy, sound plant . . ." (the insects could easily be trapped if only they knew this established fact too); "insecticides . . . began killing large numbers of other animals including man himself. There are lakes and streams *throughout* our country which are *totally devoid* of *all* life because of these wonder powders. Hundreds of thousands of acres of farm and forest lands have been sprayed, and sprayed again, poisoning the lands and *all* of the life upon it." (P. 149. Emphasis added). This is poor stuff for a book published in 1971. The facts of pollution are bad enough without piling falsehood on exaggeration.

The author extrapolates from amateur gardening to commercial farming without, apparently, recognizing any difference in scale. His treatment of gardening consists mostly of sketchy instructions on how to make compost, rather than on how to grow fruits and vegetables, as stated on the cover. Nowhere does he suggest specific methods to reduce insect damage. The whole issue is quickly sidestepped by stating that there is an enormous number of ways, all of them easy and available through a short trip to the library. No bibliography is given.

The author has an irritating knack for the wrong word, e.g.: erosion will be stifled; Sir Howard (Sir Albert Howard) forcibly exclaimed his stand; scientists who regaled in their achievements; our youth formulating a significant number of people. The writing in general is an abrasive mixture of high-flown phrases, italics and colloquialisms. It includes some completely meaningless passages about which it is difficult to write soberly; for instance: (P. 97) "A soil that is rich in microscopic life, is rich in organic matter, and is a fertile soil. A soil that is rich in organic matter is naturally a soil that is rich in microscopic life. Nature works in ever-widening circles." In ever-narrowing ones too, apparently.

Only the most heady enthusiast could

seriously wade all the way through this dull inflated, inaccurate and repetitious potboiler. I finished it with a sense of relief.

The second book is somewhat more professionally written, but I seemed not to have changed books as I struggled through the deep verbal muskeg of scores of pages of maundering about nature's cycles. I suspect that authors such as these confine their reading to each other's books, which they paraphrase for themselves. Whole pages could be exchanged between them and no one would guess the difference.

At least some instructions are given here on how to grow plants. But the book appeals fairly directly also to food faddists. Thus the last 41 pp. are devoted to brief descriptions of the nutritive value of foods, from agar-agar, ale and almonds, through carob, caviar, cola nuts, crab meat, malt, mango, margarine and oysters to vinegar, walnut and yogurt; obviously not restricted to the simpler garden crops. This is preceded by 22 pp. of tables on the vitamins of ordinary foods and their content of vital elements. The authors subscribe to the theory of "plastic" vegetables, according to which "chemicalized" foods are at best non-nutritious and at worst, toxic. There is a special but undefined meaning for the word toxic; it appears to be a much more serious and dangerous condition than merely poisonous.

On chemical pesticides (6 pp.), the authors are still hung up on DDT, which is the only one named. It is stated to be firmly linked to cancer and capable of doubling the rate of human mutation (P. 57). Before the 1940's, farmers are said to have "used natural, traditional methods, including biological control." Farmers in the 1930's and earlier did indeed use pyrethrum and rotenone but they also used traditional compounds of iron, lead, mercury, phosphorus, copper, fluorine, thallium, and most common, effective, dangerous, and persistent of all, the biocide, arsenic. There were no others available.

A number of chapters have bibliographies which refer to books rather than to articles. Something went wrong with the already inadequate 2-page index. In twenty tries I could not find a page reference that was even close.

This is not true of the book by H. A. Tyler, which has a good index. The cover blurb states that the author is a professional gardener, trained in the natural sceinces. It comes through clearly that he works from personal experience and knows whereof he writes. There is a fair amount of padding: the type is large; the right margin is irregular as in typescript; full pages and even double pages are devoted to photos of subjects such as: earthworms, compost, soil, tilling processes, a few pests and useful animals, gardens in California, the author, a handsome old dog, doing his thing, and some drawings of birds, pests, equipment and bird boxes. Nevertheless, it is a book that might appeal to many gardeners. The instructions for growing are reasonably specific so that the book could serve as a reference. It is vastly superior to the two reviewed above.

The last chapter, on the wastage of manure from large feed lots and possible solutions to the problem, is excellent.

The Rodale name should indicate that the next book is written by pros, and that the information has stood the test of time. True enough, with a few reservations. The book is organized as follows: What is an organic gardener? (8 pp.), Secrets of the best organic gardeners (96 pp.), What to grow and how (210 pp.), Protection against the bugs (50 pp.), When to harvest (16 pp.), The organic way (22 pp.), an appendix containing addresses of distributors of natural fertilizers, etc. (3 in B.C.) and organic gardening clubs (1 in B.C.), a good glossary and an index. Mostly straightforward stuff.

The section on pest control is the weakest in the book. It includes about equal amounts of enthusiasm, good sense, anthropomorphism, faith, wishful thinking, and unanswered questions. The enthusiasm is pervasive; the good sense pops up now and then as in advocating the keeping of bantam hens in the garden, a very old technique; the anthropomorphism shows, among other places, in ladybugs feasting on scales, and various birds relishing, delighting, deriving great joy or satisfaction from pests; the faith and wishful thinking go together. Aphids are said to detest plans grown in organically rich soil—but the aphids do not agree, at least not those in my garden; woodpeckers are said to consume more than 50% of codling moth larvae in winter — perhaps so, but they are hopelessly ineffective as controls in western North America, according to J. A. Marshall; bird boxes are said to attract birds that will take care of all insect problems — but the disruptive and aggressive starlings and English sparrows are scarcely mentioned.

The unanswered questions are such as these: for bean beetle control some gardeners are said to have used a mixture of crushed turnips and corn oil (P. 266). But how? In what amounts? When been beetles are active surely turnips are mostly seedlings? "Hot pepper spray is an easy and certain control" for

root maggots (P. 271). How? As a repellant? On the soil? In the soil? Against adult flies? Denatured alcohol is the remedy for mealybugs on house plants. How? No method is given. A 3% oil spray is advised for mites. Not in summer, surely? Non-toxic sprays of "sour milk and salt mixtures" are said to be effective against cabbage maggots (P. 267). How does one get sour milk through a spray nozzle? What are the nontoxic but effective concentrations of salt? And where are they applied? The habit these authors have of skipping lightly over the nitty gritty details of pest control is disconcerting and contrasts with 210 pp. of meticulous instructions on exactly what to grow, precisely how and where.

A spurious air of veracity is given by some references to published scientific papers, such as those of plant pathologists who attempted to reduce transmission of certain viruses by treatment with juice from pepper plants; or the finding that sugar kills nematodes. We read that fungi are the enemy of nematodes (P. 241), but the fungi are unspecified; the impression given is any fungi. These findings are still several removes from garden application.

The text is based on material that has appeared in Organic Gardening Magazine, and so is written by nearly a dozen authors, including notably the editor. In sum the book is worthwhile and a good one to recommend to prospective organic gardeners who can hardly fail to find of lead of some kind if not a cure for most problems.

Although it is attractively printed, bound and illustrated, it is a pity that John Harrison's book is so expensive, for it is by far the best of this group in every respect. Harrison has a deft turn of phrase and his writing is direct, fresher and more personal than that of the hacks who grind out material they have "researched", or that of the dozen professional organic writers. The first chapter, in fact, is autobiographical and presents his personal philosophy.

Harrison's grasp of science and scientific method is weak, but there is nothing wrong with his understanding of the economics of food production, nor of his distinction between farming and gardening. He is the only one of these authors who appears to make any connection between the population problem and food mass-produced with chemical fertilizers. He seems to be the only one who has actually made a living by organic farming rather than by writing about it. He was helped in this by having settled close to a large and affluent centre of population where he could get the loyal clientele and carriage trade prices that his methods demanded.

Having long eschewed their use, Harrison appears to have little real knowledge of insecticides. He drags out tired arguments such as the one about insects acquiring resistance from sub-lethal doses, then needing stronger and stronger chemicals for control. None can question the logic of his argument that those who profit from chemicals should do the work of assaying them. In fact they do. But would Harrison really prefer that the chemical companies also make the final decisions on acceptance or rejection, use patterns and dosages. Somebody has to. Would he not prefer that these details be worked out by responsible public servants with no axe to grind? Only ten pages are given to Pests and Pesticides, so that the treatment is necessarily superficial.

The chapters on Planting and Growing, Harvesting and Storing, are clear, quite specific in their instructions, and well illustrated; they include five pages on cooking. The final chapter is a mixed bag of advice, much of which seems to belong in foregoing sections. The organization falls off, but it is possible to find references with a good 5-page index.

H. R. MacCarthy