



Uncommon Fruits for Every Garden

By Lee Reich, Timber Press. 2004, 288 pages, hardback, ISBN 0-88192-623-X

Lee Reich has updated his earlier book on uncommon fruits. Each chapter discusses a single fruit or a few closely related fruits. The lists of fruits discussed is juneberry (*Amelanchier*), beach plum (*Prunus*), alpine and musk strawberries (*Fragaria*), papaw (*Asimina*), raisin tree (*Hovenia*), lingonberry (*Vaccinium*), kiwifruits (*Actinidia*), Mulberry (*Morus*), persimmons (*Diospyros*), *Elaeagnus*, gooseberry (*Ribes*), maypop (*Passiflora*), che (*Cudrania*), black currant (*Ribes*), Nanking cherry (*Prunus*), cornelian cherry (*Cornus*), red and white currants (*Ribes*), Asian pear (*Pyrus*), jostaberry (*Ribes*), lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium*), jujube (*Ziziphus*), shipova (*Sorbopyrus*), and medlar (*Mespilus*).

This is a well researched, well written study of numerous unusual or less grown fruits for North American gardens. Each fruit has an interesting and informative introduction and history as well as plant description, cultivation, propagation and cultivars. I purchased the 1991 version of this book when it first came out and have loved it and used it ever since. The book makes interesting reading for the evening chair even if one is not actively engaged in growing each of the fruits discussed. For growing any or all of these fruit plants, this book provides ample information about the plant itself, growing them successfully and getting fruit harvested and utilized. The description of cultivars is well done and extremely helpful. A list of mail order nurseries for each fruit is included at the back along with general information about planting, pruning and pollination. There are also fifty one high quality color plates of plants, foliage, flowers and fruit of the various plants discussed.

This book is ideal for teaching and discussion of the fruits included. I can find no weaknesses in it. If one already has the earlier *Uncommon Fruits Worthy of Attention*, one will find little different other than updated information on cultivars, the color plates, and the additional chapters on beach plum, lingonberry, che and shipova. Most of the text is identical. If you do have the earlier version, give it to a student and buy yourself the latest version.

Mark Hubbard
College of the Ozarks
Point Lookout, MO

Trees, Truffles, and Beasts: How Forests Function

By Chris Maser, Andrew, W. Claridge and James M. Trippe, Rutgers University Press, 2008, 280 pages, paperback, ISBN 978-0-8135-4226-3

Maser, Claridge and Trappe have written this book in an attempt to allow readers to better understand that there is much more going on in a forest ecosystem than the trees themselves and the other organisms one can visually see. That is, to see the forest “as a complex system of interactions.” To do this they carefully describe and compare forest environments in Oregon and Australia (their regions of work) and the many unseen organisms, interactions and adaptations. The chapters are: The Forest We See describing the forest infrastructure and function; The Unseen Forest of bacteria, fungi, actinomycetes and other unseen organisms; Trees, Truffles, and Beasts: Coevolution in Action tracing paths of coevolution of trees and fungi; Animals and Fungi looking closely at forest fungi and the animals which feed on them; The Importance of Mycology covering the nutritional components of fungi; Landscape Patterns and Fire discussing the impacts of fire and man's use of fire; Forest Succession and Habitat following successional stages in Oregon and Australia; Of Lifestyles and Shared Habits describing mycophagists in several habitats; and Lessons from the Trees, the Truffles and the Beasts concluding the book suggesting a shift in focus, at least in part, from economic gain in forest management. There are appendices of scientific names as well as a glossary and notes from the text.

This book's strength lies in the vast knowledge and experience of the authors from working in and studying the forest ecosystems which they describe. The authors have numerous examples and experiences of biological “feedback loops” in which organisms interact in space and time in an ultimately cyclical fashion. They propose additional interactions among the countless organisms present in soil and forests. Also, there is valuable, but perhaps too limited, discussion of the value of “biological capital” and “ecological services” in light of society's fixation with economic capital.

The intended readership of the book is difficult to determine as the book assumes little prior knowledge (*e.g.* biological nitrogen fixation is explained) and the ultimate message of the book, interaction of those biological “feedback loops” comes as little surprise to those with biology or ecology backgrounds. The publisher's comments on the back of the book hint at altering ecosystem policies, but the authors clearly

state that is not their goal and they offer no concrete solutions for the policy maker—or the forest practitioner for that matter. The book may be of value to young forestry students (but they do not take a kind view of forestry practice), and mycology or botany students early in their career may find the book interesting or useful.

Some of the analogies used are weak and would be better left out. Also, the chapter on Forest Succession has an abrupt transition into landscape patterns which does not fit well. It does make the opportunity for the authors to describe the destructive activities of man in forests. Many examples are included of the consequences of man not recognizing the interconnectedness of ecosystems. However, those examples are not always convincing: they bemoan clear-cutting in small blocks for creating discontinuous habitat, yet fires doing much the same thing create a “diversity of habitats” that are beneficial to all.

The final chapter of the book is eloquent as it (finally) draws in the concepts of ecological services and biological capital. However, most readers may not make it that far and even if they do the chapter may not warrant the effort needed to get there.

The central message of the book is not completely new: shifting of focus and accounting for the numerous interrelationships present in forests. What is new are the examples and insights into the described “feedback loops.” The book takes a lot of text—a lot of mycology—to make that point. It will take a real fascination with mycology to get through some of the chapters and even then to relate them to the overall theme brought out best in the concluding chapter.

Mark Hubbard
College of the Ozarks
Point Lookout, MO

Agribusiness Decisions and Dollars, Second Edition

**By Jack Elliot, Delmar, Cengage Learning,
Clifton Park, New York, 2009, 310 pages,
hardbound, ISBN 978-1-4283-1912-7**

This high school-level textbook provides an overview of record keeping and the financial decision making process that is crucial to the success of an agribusiness. It is based on the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and, as stated in the preface, is the first high school textbook to take this approach.

In this second edition of the text, the first chapter has been added to supply a basic discussion of key management, marketing, and economic concepts needed to be successful in today's business world. Together with the second chapter, “Developing Personal Life Skills,” a framework is provided for the student to begin the process of learning about record keeping, financial statements, financial analysis, and decision making.

The next five chapters explain key concepts as well as the four basic financial statements: the balance sheet, income statement, statement of cash flows, and statement of owner equity. The financial statements provided are based on the National Council for Agricultural Education's curriculum, National FFA awards and degree applications, and the National Management Information Systems which is the national agricultural education record book.

Chapters eight and nine provide information on analyzing the financial condition of a business by using financial ratios and applying it for decision making and planning purposes. The next two chapters cover borrowing and investing as well as taxes. Again, understanding topics such as these are important to any business' success. The final chapter of the book ties it all together by explaining the management information system and supplying the forms necessary for a student to complete a Supervised Experience Program through an FFA program.

Each chapter opens with clearly defined objectives and a list of key terms. Throughout the chapters, headings are used to guide the reader through the material. Pictures, diagrams, and figures are also used to illustrate key points. However, all are in black and white and the pictures are a bit grainy, but they are adequate to show the concept. At the end of each chapter, the material is related to the Supervised Experience Program and possible career paths allowing the student to see how this information applies directly to him/her. Discussion questions, suggested activities, and a glossary defining the key terms are also provided at the end of each chapter. With the exception of the first and last chapter, each chapter opens with a “Business Profile” which describes a real life situation for the students to consider before beginning the chapter. Dr. Elliot uses two high school students asking questions of their teacher to weave a story throughout the text. All of these items allow the student to relate to the material, and, in my opinion, leads to a better understanding of it.

The preface points out that this book covers the “need-to-know” concepts rather than the “nice-to-know” ones. I found this to be true. A student would not be able to read this book and walk away with a complete understanding of all the concepts. Furthermore, I found a couple of mistakes in the “Business Profiles” which made them confusing and could be problematic for the reader. The teacher would definitely need to further explain some of the concepts and examples so the students would have a thorough understanding of the material. Additionally, Dr. Elliot chose to describe and advise the reader to complete the balance sheet first, followed by the income statement, then the statement of cash flows, and finally the statement of owner equity. This would not be the order that I would advise the students in creating the financial

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statements; however, as I have found in many instances, there is usually more than one way to complete the task. Perhaps Dr. Elliot has found his approach works best for high school students involved in a Supervised Experience Program.

As a teacher of college-level accounting, I appreciate this book in the fact that Dr. Elliot uses a GAAP approach as well as introduces the students to financial analysis. Very few students have this background coming into college, and therefore, accounting is a challenging subject for them. Some of my students have even commented that accounting should be stressed more in high school because not only is it essential for good business practices, but it can also help them in their everyday life and personal finances. This text does a good job of providing this background and appreciation essential for today's students. Overall, I feel this text would be a good choice for a high school agricultural program.

Kimberly M. Hostetler
The Ohio State University ATI
Wooster, OH

Barnyard to Boardroom

**By Don Aslett, Marsh Creek Press,
Pocatello, ID 83204, soft cover, 187 pages,
ISBN 13 978-0-937750-36-0, ISBN 10 0-
937750-36-0**

Don Aslett is a successful business owner and prolific author who spent his childhood on a farm; using this wealth of agrarian experiences he creates analogies which convey basic business principles in his book *Barnyard to Boardroom*. His premise is that running a business is not complicated, and one can have a successful career by knowing some basic business principles. The introduction to the book provides Mr. Aslett's impetus for his writing. He relates a story in which he was on a hunting trip with some of his managers, and one of them brought along his son, a freshman in college. The student was studying for his Business 101 final exam when Mr. Aslett asked if he might look at the student's text book he was reading. Aslett thumbed through the text finding it complicated and difficult to understand. Believing that business was much simpler than the text portrayed, he decided that he could write a better book about business in which "I'd tell them how to DO business instead of talk and play business" (p. 3).

Barnyard to Boardroom is easy to read and comprehend, with many pages containing, sometimes humorous, illustrations that support the points made in the text. The book is divided into four chapters labeled for each part of a 160 acre farm: North Forty, South Forty, East Forty, and West Forty. An appendix at the end of the book contains a teacher's guide which includes an index to basic subjects, a description of what each illustrative essay teaches, and an alphabetical list of essays.

Each chapter contains numerous anecdotes of agricultural life that represent various encounters

found in business, with each anecdote containing nuggets of basic business and management principles. For example, the first chapter, North Forty, begins with a discussion about chickens, such as "How to Keep them Laying" (p. 7) where the author uses the analogy of proper and consistent feeding, along with caring for laying hens, to illustrate the importance of giving employees the resources and support needed so they will be productive and successful. In contrast, the chapter ends with a story describing a scene during which Aslett was branding cattle. He states that keeping multiple branding irons in the fire made the process more efficient by always having a well-heated iron ready to use. However, when an iron is hastily pulled from the fire, it may not have had time to heat up properly since its last use, leading to the cliché "too many irons in the fire." Aslett argues that it is not having too many irons in the fire that is the problem—having numerous irons in the fire actually increases efficiency. He states that proper management and organization of the irons is key for always having a hot iron and not grasping a cool one. Similarly, when related to time management, it is not the need to be less busy, but the need to keep tasks well organized and managed for peak efficiency.

In the last chapter, West Forty, Aslett illustrates how business owners know their business better than others. Through his examples of government employees and bankers, he shares that "...the outside expert indeed has an outside view" (p. 134) and that although others may have suggestions for increased productivity and answers to questions, the farmer has the final responsibility for the operation. He urges the reader to "deal wisely" with all consultants, analysts, and other "outsiders." An encouraging story in the same chapter explains how crop failure is not farm failure, just as the loss of a crop, or a business account, should not prompt one to sell the farm, or the company. Challenges and setbacks are part of life. Learn from mistakes and move forward.

Aslett's writing concisely conveys points through easy to understand stories. The illustrations he uses are familiar and many times poignant, addressing issues that some authors avoid such as provocative dress, with these issues running the gamut from business principles to leadership and management. Although many good points are made throughout the book, some are rather simplistic. The book is written in such a way that it can just as easily be occasionally browsed as read from beginning to end. Albeit probably not appropriate for a course text, it is enjoyable reading that illustrates business principles in an easy to understand fashion and provides many stories and anecdotes that may be useful in the classroom.

Chris Morgan
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education,
and Communication
University of Georgia
acm@uga.edu

Companion Animals in Society

By Stephen Zawistowski, Thomson Delmar Learning, 2008, hardcover, 280 pages, ISBN 13: 9781418013707

"Companion Animals in Society" is a well-written book by a highly qualified author who had the book peer-reviewed by respected university and college faculty prior to publication. Each chapter includes discussion questions, references, key terms (defined in the glossary), important topics, and excellent pictures and diagrams. To give an idea of the level the key terms are at, some are listed here: phenotype, feral, zoonotic, flyball, conformation, mitochondrial DNA, radio frequency identification (microchips), and much more. This glossary is six pages long and is very helpful.

The book begins with a brief history of companion animals and human relationships with them, including a fascinating history of dogs in the world that is based on DNA evidence and a history of cats going back to ancient Egypt. The book continues with thorough coverage of animal shelters and animal welfare, including social implications for today and from the past. The book does discuss sensitive topics such as animal neglect, bestiality, hoarding, violence toward animals, and other topics that would not be suitable for younger audiences; however, these sensitive topics are handled tactfully and at a level that would stimulate discussion in college classrooms. The book discusses the pet care industry and mentions quite a few careers that are available to interested people. Dog competitions (shows, agility, flyball, herding, etc.) are discussed in detail, and cat, rat, and mouse competitions are mentioned. There is a chapter on Assistance Dogs and their role in society. The book contains a chapter on pets in the home, which includes discussion on children's relationships with pets and discussion on how people deal with the grief of losing a furry family member (whose lifespans are much shorter than those of humans). Current topics ("hot button issues" such as declawing cats and cropping of dogs' ears) are addressed in the book. The last 30 pages of the book are dedicated to a brief Companion Animal Care Guide that contains sufficient information to inform the reader about the potential compatibility of each potential pet with the reader's lifestyle. This last section includes excellent drawings to help the reader interpret dog and cat behavior. Ferrets, hamsters, guinea pigs, mice, rats, rabbits, chinchillas, birds, and fish are also discussed briefly in this last section.

Overall, this is an excellent book suitable for use in a college classroom. (Some of the sensitive topics would not be appropriate for a high school classroom.) The author focuses primarily on dogs, but other species are covered as well. This textbook could be used in college classrooms when discussing: animal welfare/animal rights; animal behavior; human/animal interactions; history of humans related to pets and some working animals; careers

working with animals; current social topics; and other societal topics that are related to companion animals.

Addendum: Teachers who choose to use this book in the classroom may wish to also use sections of a DVD (not related to this book) that provides excellent video footage for some of the same topics discussed in the book. The DVD (2007) is called: "Nature: Dogs that Changed the World," which was a Nature miniseries on PBS and retails for approximately \$20 from online booksellers or from PBS.

Jeannette A. Moore
Department of Animal Science
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC

Introduction to Agronomy: Food, Crops and Environment

By Craig C. Sheaffer and Kristine M. Moncada, Delmar Cengage Learning, 2009, hardcover, 564 pages, ISBN 13: 978-1-4180-5037-5, ISBN 10: 1-4180-5037-7

This textbook, designed for students in an introductory plant science, agronomy, or crop science course, makes a conscious effort to place agronomy in a broad environmental and societal context. For example, the second chapter (Agriculture Today) includes discussions on organic agriculture and the U.S. farm policy, the fourth chapter (Food from Plants) covers human nutrition and patterns of food consumption in the U.S., and the final chapter (Feeding the World) examines current issues such as trends in food production and consumption, and potential future roles of agricultural sciences in addressing world hunger.

There are chapters covering the main traditional topics in an introductory crop science text, such as plant anatomy, plant physiology, plant breeding, soils, the environment, cropping systems, tillage, weeds, disease and insects, and harvesting. A relatively small portion of the textbook is devoted to specific crops. Of the twenty chapters, three contain crop profiles, divided into grasses, legumes, and other agronomically important plants. All chapters start with a list of the key concepts that will be covered, as well as a list of key terms (all of which are found in an extensive glossary at the back of the book). Individual chapters have less detailed text than some other agronomy textbooks and have a higher proportion of tables, figures, and photos. The text is easy to follow, often because main points in a section are bulleted with brief explanations. The large number of line drawings are particularly helpful. Their clean and clear appearance, along with appropriate labeling make them easy to use by both the instructor and the student. Each chapter ends with review questions that are well-written. The questions ask students to display understanding of the subject matter on a

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number of different levels of intellectual activity. Following the review questions in each chapter are three to five critical-thinking questions. These questions frequently require the student to take the broader concepts from a chapter and apply them to their own state or region, to apply them to a particular crop or cropping system, or to respond thoughtfully to controversial topics in agronomy. The references that end each chapter have been chosen to allow students to dig deeper into a topic, but include sources that should be of benefit to the student. Frequently websites are included, as are extension publications and other textbooks.

Both of the authors are at the University of Minnesota. While many of the photographs are from the upper Midwest, descriptions and examples of concepts are sufficiently broad that the text is suitable for use in all parts of the U.S. and Canada.

The textbook specifically addresses a student population that likely was not raised on a farm and also is less likely to be directly involved in agricultural production when they complete college. The text is suitable for teaching students who will go on to further studies in agronomy. For students who will have no further courses in the discipline, it provides a good foundation for helping them become citizens who are well-informed about agriculture.

David Knauff
Horticulture Department
University of Georgia
Athens, GA

***“Advancing the scholarship of
teaching and learning”***

