were important crops in the history of India and Pakistan as was the long staple tetraploid *G. barbadense* in the West Indies, Egypt and the Sudan.

The informative text is well supported by coloured and black and white plates, photographs, 'information' boxes, an index and a list of useful websites. There is also a list of books for further reading. This is an enjoyable book for the general public and is recommended particularly to agriculturists, botanists, chemists, historians, horticulturalists and socio-economists. It is excellent value at a price of £12.99.

N. L. Innes

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Wild Crop Relatives: Genomic and Breeding Resources. Plantation and Ornamental Crops. Edited by C. Kole. Heidelberg, Germany: Springer (2011), pp. 303, £135.00. ISBN 978-3-642-21200-0.

The editor's ambitious objective is a comprehensive reference book on the selected genera, showing the potential contribution of wild relatives to the improvement of the crops themselves. Thirteen genera are included in this book of a 10-volume series: *Antirrhinum*, *Camellia*, *Coffea* (including *Psilanthus*), *Cola*, *Digitalis*, *Elaeis*, *Euphorbia*, *Gladiolus*, *Lilium*, *Nicotiana*, *Petunia*, *Rosa* and *Theobroma*. The chapters are variable in length and coverage. The reasons for this include the varying economic importance of the crops, and so the research that has been done, for example *Cola* has received little attention compared to say *Coffea* or *Elaeis*, some crops being more amenable than others to inter-specific approaches. Thus, inter-specific hybridisation has as yet to contribute to the genetic improvement of *Theobroma cacao*, and perhaps most importantly, the 64 authors have different interests. There are up to nine main paragraphs on each genus, with most genera including descriptions of basic botany, genetic and genomic resources, conservation of genetic resources, the role of genetic resources in classical breeding and application of molecular methods, 'dark sides' (plants becoming invasive) and recommendations for future actions. *Camellia* is limited to introduction, botany, *in vitro* culture, employment of markers, genomic resources and future thrusts. The better chapters adequately discuss the available knowledge, but some are written from a narrower perspective than the editor's objective requirements. Overall, the book would have benefitted from editing for content of individual chapters and in some cases copy editing.

Rob Lockwood

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Top 100 Exotic Food Plants. By E. Small. Boca Raton, Fl, USA: CRC Press (2011), pp. 708, £57.99. ISBN 978-1439856864.

A book to own and enjoy, yet with some niggling features. It does not go into the details of taxonomy and cultivation that Pursglove's *Tropical Crops* (Longman, UK 1968) provided for many years. Not a cookery book: rather an excursion into ethnobotany. The author impresses from the outset with those who want to take issue with the title (what *does* constitute 'exotic' and 'food'?) and gets away with a list that includes stimulants and barely edible plants. The illustrations – drawings from early sources – are a delight.

The list exceeds 100 by including both close relatives and even groups of plants such as 'cacti' and 'Japanese vegetables', but each choice can be read separately, making it an easy book to dip into. Copious explanations on the etymology of common and scientific names risk making the reader a smug pedant. Possibly as a result of sourcing from a vast number of references, this list would benefit from the removal of repetitious and overly obscure information. Emphasis on the 'typical height' of a species rather than the maximum height would be more realistic.

I suspect that the author, an eminent botanist, enjoyed compiling this information. Not a cheap book, but highly recommended.

Ian Martin