

The *Handbooks* will attract a broad readership – the relevance of soil science to a range of disciplines, including agriculture, engineering, ecology, biology, hydrology, geography, geology and archaeology, is often mentioned. They will be accessible and valuable to different levels of readership, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, and professional practitioners interested in the theoretical and applied aspects of soil science. This is an expensive purchase, but the *Handbooks* do offer comprehensive, state-of-the-art and accessible knowledge on soil science, which is universal and will stand the test of time. As such, the volumes represent a worthwhile investment for anyone with a long-term interest in soil science.

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*Okra Handbook. Global Production, Processing and Crop Improvement.* Edited by B. S. Dhankar and R. Singh. New York: HNB Publishing (2009), pp. 475, US\$110.00. ISBN 978-0-9728061-8-3.

Okra, commonly called *lady's finger* or *bhindi* is a vegetable crop belonging to the family Malvaceae. This is the first book on okra with fairly up-to-date information on production, processing and crop improvement. Authors mainly from India (24) and United States (11) and eight other countries (19) have contributed 25 chapters. The book has been presented in two parts with 15 chapters in the first part. The first six chapters cover origin, taxonomy, morphology, physiology, biochemical constituents and quality. Two chapters then cover genetic resources and genetic improvement. Four chapters are devoted to crop production, including plastic culture, post-harvest management and seed production. The next three chapters focus on pest and disease management. In the second part, results of research from seven countries are reviewed in nine chapters. The last chapter deals with a leafy vegetable from the genus *Abelmoschus*. There is overlapping of information in parts I and II and some duplication of information between chapters. Nevertheless, the information contained in this book is very valuable for students, teachers and researchers in both the public and private sectors who are interested in okra production, processing and utilization.

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*Sustainable Urban Environments: An Ecosystem Approach.* Edited by E. B. Bueren, H. van Bohemen, L. Itard and H. Visscher. Heidelberg, Dordrecht, London, New York: Springer (2012), pp. 429, £44.99 (p.b.) ISBN 978-94-007-1293-5.

In the next 30 years, the world will undergo an urban revolution. Throughout the developing world, new towns and cities will explode into farmlands and wetlands to accommodate billions of new residents, creating newly built environments that will require new power grids, water delivery and disposal infrastructure, and expanded transport systems. Established urban areas, largely in Europe and North America, will struggle to transform themselves towards greater efficiencies with regard to the use of energy and other natural resources without destroying the historical legacies that made them thrive in earlier centuries. A key imperative for all of these upcoming urban transformations will be increased sustainability, that is, more efficient use of natural resources (water, air and land) for residential and commercial uses; materials for construction; and energy for heating, cooling, transport and the electronic systems on which modern commerce depends. The authors of this edited volume suggest that progress is being made towards developing design approaches and technologies that will address the sustainability imperative, especially in the redevelopment of European cities. Using an 'ecosystem approach', they discuss ways in which the design of the built environment can be improved and better integrated to provide for a livable, yet sustainable, built environment. Van Bueren and her colleagues from Delft University have clearly intended this book as a teaching tool, signaling that it provides a 'first step' into the consideration of urban sustainability. A companion volume that dealt in greater detail with the 'profit and policy' aspects of sustainable and successful urban development and function would also be welcome.

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