Reading

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Westcott's Plant Disease Handbook

Cynthia Westcott, revised by R. Kenneth Horst, Ph.D. New York. 1979. Fourth Edition. 803 pp. $32.50.

The fourth edition of this old standard is a badly needed updating. It follows very closely the format of the previous editions, and is no harder (nor easier) to use than they were. There is a good section on commercially available chemicals - more up-to-date than might have been expected for such a weighty undertaking, and including a few which had not yet been released when this edition was printed. Where common names have been given by the American Standards Association, those have been used; where no official common name has been assigned, the trade name has been used. A few of the chemicals on the list are now discontinued, but some stocks may still be available for use.

The two main sections of the book, as in the past, are quite comprehensive lists of, first, plant diseases classified by types—as anthracnose, blackspot, leaf blister, rots, rusts, and virus diseases—and, second, a list of host plants—mostly by common name, except where the botanical name would eliminate some chance of confusion. A few new host plants have been added to the list, and many newly reported diseases, as well as previously known ones, now reported on new hosts, are included. Some photographs have been replaced, and a few color plates have been added. A few name changes in the bacteria, fungi and mistletoes appear. The sections on virus diseases, though cursory, explains many of the changes in thought on virology which have appeared in recent years.

Not by any means a panacea for all ills, this volume at least gives the non-pathologist a chance to identify the plant disease he is confronted with at the moment. Even with the aid of such a tome as this, plant disease identification is difficult—without it, the task is impossible. There is not a golf course superintendent, landscape architect, florist, nurseryman, seed and fungicide dealer, pesticide applicator, arborist, cooperative extension agent or specialist, plant pathologist, horticultural consultant, or gardener who will not find this book not just a valuable aid, but a good investment. You can't spray for it if you don't know what it is!