

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xiii

A Note on Names xv

INTRODUCTION 1

Meet the Ancestors—Wild Crops 2

Nature and Nurture—Evolution, Natural and Human-Directed 3

Thrust Unwillingly to the Stage—Plant Breeding Enters Politics 5

The Story of Plant Breeding 7

Abbreviations 11

PART ONE FROM THE BIRTH OF AGRICULTURE TO THE BIRTH OF GENETICS 13

ONE. ORIGINS: THE DOMESTICATION OF PLANTS 15

"A gathering we will go"—From Foraging to Farming 16

Maize Mysteries 20

As the Farmer Drives the Plow—Evolution in Early Agriculture 24

Serendipity—Interspecific Hybridization 31

Planting Cities and Streets—Domestication and Civilization 35

TWO. LANDRACES: BEDROCK OF TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE 38

Unique to Time and Place—Landraces 39

Weaving a Coat of Many Colors—The Origins of Diversity 41

Seed and Spirit—Diversity and Landrace Politics 48

THREE. "IMPROVEMENT": THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION 55

A Time of Ferment—The Age of Multiple Revolutions 55

From Fodder to Fruit—New Crops and New Markets 60

New Rice, New Methods—Song China's "Green Revolution" 64

Hemmed between the Mountains and the Sea—Japan 65

FOUR. VEGETABLE MULES:

THE BEGINNINGS OF DELIBERATE BREEDING 68

Floral Facts of Life—Early Knowledge about Plants and Sex 70

Outrage! The Cautious Beginnings of Deliberate Hybridization 73

The Professors—Kölreuter and Other Academic Hybridists 77

- Gentleman Practitioners—Thomas Andrew Knight and Others* 80
Sex and the Single Strawberry 83
Sweet Necessity—Sugarcane and Sugar Beet 87
Moravia—Land of Progress 89
From the Greenhouse to the Pulpit—Hybridization and Popular Attitudes 93

FIVE. EMPIRE: GLOBALIZATION IN EARNEST 97

- A Universal Garden—Global Exchanges of Crops* 98
From One Hedgerow to Many Fields—Finding and Distributing New Cereal Varieties 102
Breeding a Dynasty—The Vilmorin Family 107
Onwards and Upwards—The “German Method” 109
Weaving the Bread Basket of the World 111
Poverty and the Potato—A New Crop Is Adapted Slowly to a New Home 117
Seeds of Conflict—Variety Selection and Imperial Rule 120
Cotton, Spinner of Many Troubles 122
An Apple a Day—The Rise of the Fruit Industry 128
The Strawberry—A Soft and Juicy Story Continues 134
A Free-for-All—The Arrival of the Seed Catalog 138

SIX. BREAKTHROUGH: GREGOR MENDEL 142

- Sowing the Prairies and the Plains—Plant Breeding in the Late-Nineteenth-Century United States* 144
Britons Unbending—The 1899 Conference and the Introduction of Mendel 151
A New Word for a New Concept—“Genetics” and the 1902 and 1906 Conferences 155
Light from the North—Scandinavian Progress in Crop Genetics 160

SEVEN. GERMINATION: MENDELISM AND PLANT BREEDING

IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY 167

- Twilight of the Gentleman Amateur—Mendel in Britain* 169
Slowly and Unsteadily—Mendelian Progress in Germany and France 175
Plant Breeding in a Packet—W. Atlee Burpee 177
The Independent Spirit Lives on—Potatoes 181
An Unpleasant Diversion—Eugenics 183

EIGHT. LUTHER BURBANK:

MIRACLE WORKER OR CHARLATAN? 187

The Gene Pool as Cornucopia—Rise of a Genetic Wizard 187

A Reputation Impaled—On a Spineless Cactus 192

NINE. "LET HISTORY JUDGE":

PLANT BREEDING AND POLITICS IN THE USSR 197

Days of Hope—Nikolai Vavilov 197

Days of Delusion—Ivan Michurin and "Soviet Creative Darwinism" 201

Days of Madness—Trofim Lysenko and "Agrobiology" 204

Seed Collecting at Gunpoint—Nazi Germany and Genetic Resources 212

PART TWO FLOWERING OF A TECHNOLOGY 215

TEN. HYBRID! CORN AND THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF F₁

HYBRIDIZATION 217

Gift of the Gods—Corn 219

Shows, Lab Tests, and Beauty Contests—Just What Makes Good Corn? 223

Too Fantastic a Concept? The Birth of Hybrid Corn 227

New Crops, New Business 233

The Scientist as Mystic? The Barbara McClintock Legend 238

"CRUNCH!" the Irresistible Savor of Summer—Sweet Corn 240

Power Politics, Pesticides, and Obesity—the F₁ Corn Story Continues 241

A Con-Trick with Corn? A Critical Perspective on Hybrid Corn 244

ELEVEN. CORNUCOPIA:

GENETICS OPENS UP THE HORN OF PLENTY 251

Crossing the Boundaries—The Hybrid Story Continues 253

Casting the Net Ever Wider—Hybridizing between Species 256

In Full Flower—Plant Breeding as an Applied Science 261

Compounding the Compounds—Breeding for Plant Chemistry 263

The Genetics of the Roulette Wheel—Mutation Breeding 266

One Set of Chromosomes Good, Two Sets Better—Polyploidy 272

The Juggernaut of Progress Rolls on—The Gastronomic and Social Impacts of Plant Breeding 273

Cereal Makeover—Redesigning Wheat 277

The Grass Keeps on Getting Greener—A Short Journey along the Back Roads of Breeding 279

TWELVE. GREEN REVOLUTION:

CAN PLANT BREEDING FEED THE WORLD? 284

- The Baleful Eye—Thomas Malthus and Food Policy* 287
Iowa Farm Boy Makes Good in Mexico—Norman Borlaug 291
A Fantasy no More—India Feeds Itself 298
Food for Half Our Race—Boosting Rice Yields 301
New Seeds, New Hope, New Problems—The Green Revolution's First Decade 305
Beyond Yield—The Revolution Marches on 319
Not Green and Not a Revolution? Critical Voices 321
Malthus Defied! Conclusions 325

THIRTEEN. ORNAMENT: FURNISHING OUR GARDENS 329

- The Show's the Thing—The Florists and Their Flowers* 331
Tulip Madness and the Origins of Capitalism 335
Passion and Obsession—Nurserymen Breeders and Gentleman Amateurs 336
A Rose Is a Rose Is a Rose—But the Genes are Never the Same 343
A Garden in a Packet—The Flower Seed and Bulb Trade 345
Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose—The Twentieth Century's Endless Search for Novelty 348
The Perfection of the Unnatural—Ornamental Plant Breeding as Art and Fashion 356

FOURTEEN. OWNERSHIP AND DIVERSITY: ISSUES OF PROPERTY RIGHTS OVER PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES 364

- Use It, Save It, or Lose It! Gene Banks* 366
For the Public Good—Plant Breeding by the Taxpayer 370
Whoever Owns the Seed Owns the Crop—Private and Corporate Breeding 374
Keep Off! Those Seeds Are Mine! The Rise of Patent Protection 381
Helping Hands or Thieving Hands? Patents, Developing Countries, and the International Agencies 385
Challenging the Boundaries—Participatory Breeding 389
Respecting Nature, but What Is Natural? The Dilemmas of Breeding for Organic Agriculture 393
Counting the Cost of Monopolies—Some Conclusions 394

FIFTEEN. CONCLUSIONS 398

- The Grand Narrative: A Summary of Plant Breeding History* 399

Of Empires and Harvests—What Drives Plant Breeding? 402
Henry Ford and the Genetic Bottleneck 406
Fundamental Rupture or Logical Progression? GM Crops and History 409
Attack of the Literary Locusts—The Opponents of Plant Breeding 411
The Future is Creole 417

Technical Notes 421
Bibliographic Essay 437
Works Cited and Consulted 451
Index 477