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<i>Methods of Approach in Teaching Taxonomy:</i> PROFESSOR K. M. WIEGAND	291	<i>Special Articles:</i>	
<i>Obituary:</i>		<i>A New Type of Enzyme in the Intestinal Tract:</i> DR. MAX BERGMANN and JOSEPH S. FRUTON. <i>The Alcoholic Admissions to Bellevue Hospital:</i> DR. NORMAN JOLLIFFE	306
<i>Charles Loring Jackson:</i> PROFESSOR GREGORY P. BAXTER, FRANCIS G. PEABODY and EDWIN H. HALL. <i>Recent Deaths</i>	294	<i>Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:</i>	
<i>Scientific Events:</i>		<i>The Use of Polarized Light in the Simultaneous Comparison of Retinally and Cortically Fused Colors:</i> EDWIN H. LAND and DR. WILLIAM A. HUNT. <i>A Precision Apparatus for Mixing Gases in Various Proportions:</i> PROFESSOR B. N. SINGH and P. B. MATHUR	309
<i>The Reorganization of the Medical School of McGill University; Report of the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry of the American Medical Association on the New Ergot Alkaloid; Conservation in Colorado; The Seattle Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science</i>	296	<i>Science News</i>	8
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	298		
<i>Discussion:</i>			
<i>Globigerina Beds as Depth Indicators in the Tertiary Sediments of Fiji:</i> DR. HARRY S. LADD. <i>The Occurrence of Cupulae on Lateral-Line Organs:</i> MARTHA DENNY. <i>The Life History of a Poultry Cestode:</i> DR. MYRNA F. JONES and DR. MARGERY W. HORSFALL. <i>Sulfocyanate Treatment of Mange in Guinea Pigs:</i> DR. EMMETT B. CARMICHAEL	301		
<i>Scientific Books:</i>			
<i>Faraday's Diary:</i> PROFESSOR W. F. MAGIE. <i>Human Ecology:</i> PROFESSOR E. M. EAST	304		

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METHODS OF APPROACH IN TEACHING TAXONOMY¹

By Professor K. M. WIEGAND

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SOME years ago a questionnaire addressed to taxonomists, plant workers and educators indicated quite clearly a belief that there exists at present a dearth of taxonomists, of taxonomic teaching and also a lack of appreciation of the subject. While the replies to these questionnaires easily indicated the need for taxonomy in the various fields of plant study, and in biology in general, the reasons for the apparent failure of the subject were not so apparent. In fact, many reasons were given and with varying emphasis. I was at that time a member of the committee issuing the questionnaire and have been much interested in the matter ever since.

¹ Read before the Systematic Section of the Botanical Society of America at Pittsburgh, December, 1934.

It is undeniable that taxonomy has been unpopular for the last several decades. Among the many contributory reasons often mentioned are the following: (1) Lack of available instruction; (2) deficiencies in type of instruction; (3) lack of openings for employment in the profession; (4) lack of well-paying positions as an ultimate goal; (5) dearth of students with a "taxonomic mind"; (6) reputation of taxonomy as an unimportant branch of botany; (7) lack of appreciation of one's taxonomic work by others; (8) lack of sympathy with the unstable condition of nomenclature and group limits; (9) difficulty of pursuing taxonomy away from taxonomic centers; (10) a more detailed training to become a good teacher of taxonomy than is necessary in other branches of botany. These

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