Heavy Metal Contamination of Soil: Problems and Remedies

The first question that springs to mind after reading this volume is, Why? Why was it considered a good idea to produce yet another book that purports to deal with the manifest problems associated with heavy metal contamination of soil? What advantages would this volume have over its predecessors? What fresh insight would its contributors bring to bear on the answers to this continuing problem?

The answer, in brief, is very little. This is a reflection on both the content and the editing of that material. The chapters are arranged in no discernable order, so there is no feel of a flow of interrelated information. There are useful reviews on microbial effects on soil metal speciation, lead phytoextraction, and bioremediation (although the latter chapter focuses on organic contaminants, despite the title of the book). The review of practical aspects of biosolid application to land, while useful, does not really fall within the remit of the book’s title. The chapter on metals in temperate forest soils is very curious; a detailed review merges seamlessly into a lengthy research paper on chemical and microbial studies of soils in a particular polluted region of northwestern Russia (Kola Peninsula). The remainder of the book’s content either adds little to the debate on soil metal contamination or is best described as a random selection of non-peer reviewed research papers of limited relevance or importance. The volume lacks both focus and, more crucially, editorial rigor. A volume to borrow, but not to own.

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