Traditional food plants of Kenya [1999]
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Abstract
This book aims to help the user to appreciate this wealth of plant resources, the cultural traditions behind their use in Kenya and how to recognize and utilize them for the wellbeing of society, including urban communities, in these times of recurring food shortages and increasing reliance on a few commercial food crops. In addition to describing the ways in which the plants are used as food by the various communities, medicinal, ethnobotanical, cultural, household and other users are also given to show the value of each species to the communities concerned, as well as its potential for use elsewhere. The great range of climatic and ecological conditions prevailing in Kenya has resulted in a flora of about 7100 distinct plant species and several thousand subspecies and varieties, some widely distributed, others endemic or more restricted in occurrence. Very many of these species are used traditionally for food as well as a wide variety of other purposes. Leafy vegetables, fruit, roots and tubers collected from the wild often play a crucial nutritional role for rural communities, for example in children’s diets and in times of famine, and some are cultivated on a small scale in homegardens. But on the whole, as elsewhere in the world, these traditional food plants have been neglected in Kenya and their vast potential for domestication and improvement has barely begun to be exploited. The book will be invaluable for researchers, development workers and