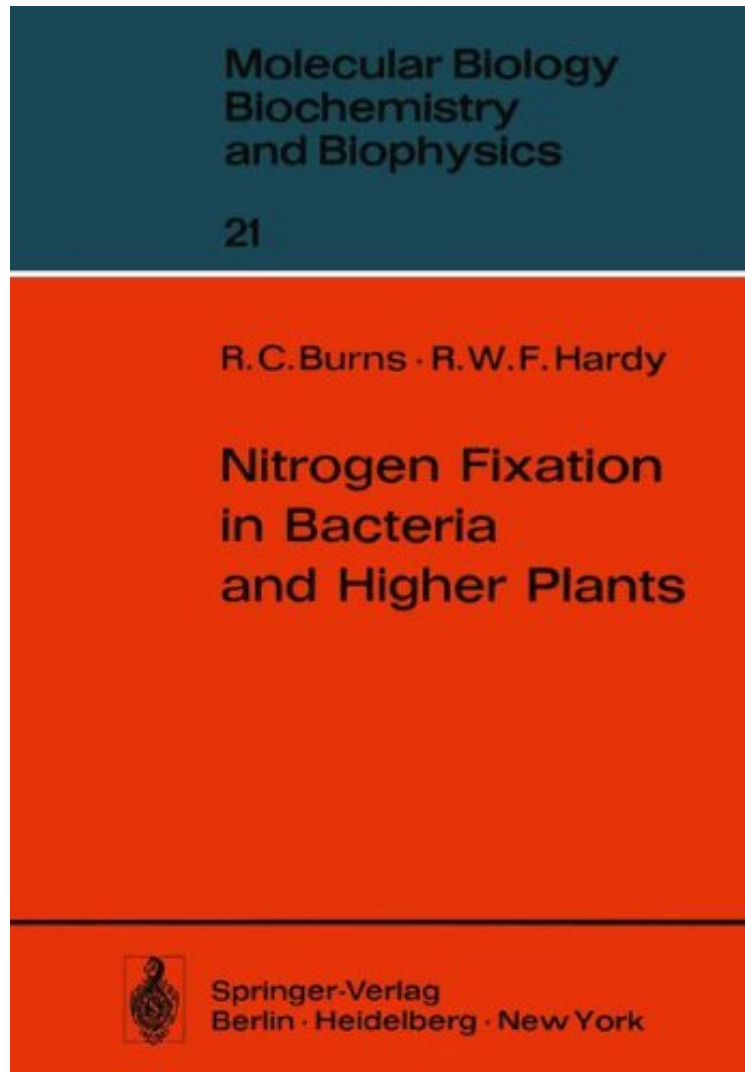


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Nitrogen Fixation in Bacteria and Higher Plants (Molecular Biology, Biochemistry and Biophysics Molekularbiologie, Biochemie und Biophysik)

R.C. Burns, R.W.F. Hardy

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Our knowledge of the biochemistry and biophysics of dinitrogen fixation has developed rapidly in the 15 years since the first N₂-fixing enzyme system was successfully extracted from a bacterium. This period has produced a literature that now describes the N₂ fixation reaction and the nitrogenase enzyme itself in sophisticated terms, though a detailed reaction mechanism at the chemical level has not yet emerged. It is the purpose of the present monograph to present an in-depth review, analysis, and integration of this research as is possible with a non-contributed publication and to relate this work to considerations of N₂ fixation that reach beyond the confines of the biochemist's laboratory. The first section is directed as much toward the general science reader as toward the specialist. It covers the agricultural origins of man's interest in N₂ fixation and also pertinent areas of taxonomy, physiology, and evolution. Ecological aspects of the subject include a comprehensive evaluation of the nitrogen cycle leading to a substantially greater estimate of the rate of global N₂ fixation than previous ones. The treatment is of a survey fashion, in part to provide a general over-view of N₂ fixation and in part to provide context for the biochemistry and biophysics that follow in the second section.