The green building movement has grown significantly over the past few years. Numerous rating systems and guidelines have been published, and a wealth of rapidly changing information about site planning, building materials, water, energy, etc. may overwhelm students, architects, and anyone in the construction industry.

Traci Rose Rider, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP, and a partner in a consulting firm focused on supporting green building initiatives, offers the reader an overview of several national green building rating systems and guidelines, as well as several local systems. These guidelines include LEED, The Natural Step, Green Globes, National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) National Green Building Program, and local programs in Austin, TX, Arlington, VA, Portland, OR, Santa Monica, CA, Scottsdale, AZ, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Rider’s goal in writing this book is to provide readers with a basic understanding of some of the available guidelines and rating systems available so that they may be able to choose the most appropriate system for their needs.

Each chapter is devoted to a different rating system or guideline, and includes a snapshot of the guideline’s goals, its organizational structure, and a breakdown of its point system. The most attention is given to the LEED rating system, as it is the most well known. The last chapter includes brief overviews of the local programs. Breakout boxes are used throughout the text in order to highlight certain topics. While each chapter seems unreasonably short in comparison to the size of the topic in discussion, Rider explains that her intention is only to provide enough information to understand the goals, benefits, and limitations of each system.

While Rider is able synthesize a large amount of complex information into a small space, ultimately succeeding in her goal, there are two minor weaknesses. Despite valuable overviews of each system, direct comparisons between them are scarce. Another chapter, or some other dedicated space strictly for comparisons between systems would have been advantageous to the reader. The only other drawback is a result of how rapidly the green building field changes. At the time of writing, both LEED and Green Globes were revising and issuing new versions of their standards, and so some information in this book is already outdated. Linda Reeder’s forthcoming Guide to Green Building Rating Systems: Understanding LEED, Green Globes, Energy Star, the National Green Building Standard, and More may provide more current information.

Understanding Green Building Guidelines for Students and Young Professionals includes an index, table of contents, bibliography, and references for further reading. Illustrations are included, though more would have been appreciated.

As its title suggests, this book is intended for students and young professionals. It would be a welcome addition to any architecture library.

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