

GARDENERS AND THEIR BOOKS

By Ronnie Brancazio and Jenny Holmes

One of us has a refrigerator magnet that says: "If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." It's attributed to Cicero, but could have been written by us, especially if the library contains lots of Garden Books!

We were talking together about our love of books - especially of gardening books - and began sharing our favorite titles, past and present. We thought we would share these favorites with you, our fellow gardeners, in the hope that you would recognize some and learn about others.

The Garden books that we have read and collected over the years seem to fall into several distinct categories, as follows:

A) HOW-TO BOOKS, which can then be either GENERAL GARDEN INSTRUCTION or on SPECIFIC TOPICS

B) BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHIC BOOKS about FAMOUS GARDENS or GARDENING METHODS (such as BORDERS or MEADOWS, etc.)

C) REFERENCE BOOKS, which can be on broad topics (such as TREES) or specific topics (such as NEMATODES)

D) GARDEN MEMOIRS, REFLECTIONS ON THE GARDENER'S LIFE

E) ESSAY COLLECTIONS ON THE "PHILOSOPHY" OF GARDENS AND NATURE, and OUR ROLE IN BOTH - WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED "WISDOM" BOOKS

F) CHILDREN'S BOOKS TO INSTRUCT OR INSTILL A LOVE OF GARDENING THROUGH STORYTELLING

G) NOVELS THAT CENTER ON OUR INTERACTIONS WITH NATURE

As with most things, there are trends in garden books, such as the recent focus on Native Plants and Pollinators, which is crucial at this time. The important thing is that the books keep coming, and in great variety, even in these days of consulting "Prof. Google" about everything! There are promising book reviews in every issue of the gardening magazines, and a trip to the Bookshop area of the NYBG Gift Shop is delightfully overwhelming.

The wonderful, beautifully produced books in categories (A), (B) and (C) make for great browsing and finding specific information or advice, and are a pleasure to behold.

For this article, though, we would like to focus on the books in (D), (E), (F), and (G), which are books to curl up with for a GOOD READ! The titles we are sharing with you are our individual favorites - some are well-known and some less so, but each has stayed with us in a unique and personal way. So here they are:

MEMOIRS, REFLECTIONS, WISDOM

A Way to Garden by Margaret Roach

A hands-on primer for every season by a very popular writer and blogger.

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

As an indigenous scientist, the author demonstrates how all living things provides us with gifts and lessons, and gives us an ecological understanding of nature.

The Comfort of Crows by Margaret Renkl

Beautifully written essays on experiencing nature throughout the year, and what meaning we can derive from these experiences. The author writes a weekly column for The NY Times. The essays are illustrated with gorgeous full-page illustrations by the author's brother.

Dream, Garden, Grow by Lee Miller

Musings of a lifetime gardener.

The Light Eaters by Zoe Schlanger

The latest scientific discoveries about plant biology in a highly readable and engrossing style. The findings are amazing and thought-provoking.

Gardening for a Lifetime by Sydney Eddison

How to garden Wiser as you Grow Older.

The Garden Awakening by Mary Reynolds

Garden designs to nurture our land and ourselves.

The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlhan

What trees feel and how they communicate - discoveries from a secret world.

The Artist, The Cook, and The Gardener by Mary Jo Koch

Writing inspired by painting in the garden.

Emily Dickinson's Gardening Life by Marta McDowell

Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life by Marta McDowell

Gardening Can be Murder by Marta McDowell

All three books are delightfully written and well-illustrated, and the author will be our OCTOBER SPEAKER!

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A Child's Book of Wildflowers by M.A. Kelly

An informative introduction to wildflowers of North America with wonderful illustrations.

Complete Works of Beatrix Potter

Themes of friendship, nature and adventure in timeless stories.

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

A world of beauty, wonder, and imagination, filled with innocence and the nurturing power of love. Enchanting!

Butterfly Island and the Invincible Crew by Tracy Dockray and Ellen Federico

Exciting story about the creation of a Monarch Butterfly refuge - for ages 5 - 9.
Ellen Federico will be our MARCH SPEAKER!

NOVELS ABOUT OUR PLACE IN NATURE

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens

Nature mystery told in gorgeous, lyrical prose.

Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver

Flight Behavior by Barbara Kingsolver

One of our finest writers is also a scientist and creator of wonderful stories.

The Overstory by Richard Powers

A very moving novel about humanity's connection with the natural world.

The Island of Missing Trees by Elif Shafak

An engrossing love story on the island of Cyprus - and a main character is a FIG TREE!

These are some of our favorites, and we hope you will dip into a few and feel enriched by your reading experience.

We would love to hear about YOUR FAVORITES and will have a Notepad at the next meeting where you can write them down. The next-best thing to SHARING PLANTS is SHARING BOOKS ABOUT PLANTS!