

Favorite Garden Reading

Besides digging and planting and weeding and composting and nursery-hopping and sharing and deadheading and seed-saving, what do gardeners do with their time? Like when it's dark, or cold or rainy or stormy, just what do they do? They catch up on other activities, they study seed catalogs and bulb catalogs and visit interesting Web sites, and they READ. They read gardening magazines and gardening books. When the Master Gardener office is closed, your best gardening friends' lines are busy or their answering machines are on, a book often has the answer to your question. When your friends are busy and you go to a nursery or plant sale by yourself and no one seems to know much about the plant you've just become enchanted with, the book you brought along and left in the car (just in case you needed to refer to it) may have the information you want. When you're physically weary and stop gardening in order to have a cup of tea or to put your feet up, a gardening book is the best companion.

Here are some of the books we've been digging into recently.

Gardening in Containers

The Taunton Press, Inc., Newtown, CT, 2002.

Containers offer gardeners more than patio, front door or window accents. They can fill empty spaces and serve as focal points in the garden. They can be used to delineate paths and steps. They can be placed in either sunny or shady spots.

This book contains ideas for container gardening from over twenty designers who regularly contribute to *Fine Gardening* magazine. It invites you to:

- Design containers for year-round interest
- Create water gardens
- Care for plants in containers
- Include containers in a larger garden
- Select appropriate containers
- Grow roses, bulbs, and trees in containers

Lavishly illustrated and with great attention to detail this book showcases containers for spaces you didn't realize needed them. It is a wonderful book to look at and plan your next container plantings.

The Pacific Northwest Gardener's Book of Lists

By Ray and Jan McNeilan

Taylor Publishing Company. Dallas, TX, 1997.

The title says it all! *The Book of Lists* is a compilation of more than 200 lists of plants that are suited to specific uses in Pacific Northwest gardens. It's a great place to start looking when you want to make sure you put the right plant in the right place. Do you need a shrub that will grow in alkaline soil? A groundcover to stabilize a slope? How about a tree for a dry site? You'll find lists of plants for these situations in this book, along with many other lists of particular plant characteristics, growing conditions, and uses. Plants are listed by both common names and scientific names, making it easy for both novice and experienced gardeners to understand.

This book, which was written by Master Gardeners, is organized by plant type (trees, shrubs, vines, etc.) and includes separate chapters about roses and rhododendrons and azaleas. It features gardening tips and anecdotes written by nursery personnel, horticulturists, and other gardening enthusiasts from the Pacific Northwest. This book does not have photographs or descriptions of plants, so it is best used in combination with a plant encyclopedia. It is also a good idea to consult the index after you've chosen a plant to make sure, for example, that the shrub you selected for heavy shade isn't also listed as a shrub that can become invasive. Some cross-referencing of the lists may be necessary, in addition to reading about the plant in an encyclopedia.

The Plant Locator, Western Region

Compiled by Susan Hill and Susan Narizny

Timber Press, Portland, OR, 2004.

This book is not one you can easily curl up with on a cold winter evening just to pass the time. However, it is an invaluable resource when you are looking for a specific plant or variety. More than 50,000 plants are listed, organized by their Latin names. Forgotten the Latin name? Consult the extensive list of common names included in the book. For each plant, at least one nursery that carries the plant is listed. It is also easy to tell at a glance in which western state the nursery is located. Whether you are an advanced gardener wanting to broaden your palette or a beginner with a specific garden wish list, this reference book is a must on your bookshelf.

The Ultimate Book of Gardening, a Practical Guide to Making the Most of Your Garden.

Antony Atha, Jane Courtier, Margaret Crowther & Sue Hook, and David Squire

Parragon Publishing, UK, 2003.

This book is divided into four sections: container gardening, the small garden, gardening through the year, and garden design. As it is a large book, beautifully illustrated with color pictures and drawings, it makes a great coffee-table book; but it is also excellent reading, and a great resource for how to garden in different situations.

Take Two Plants

By Nicola Ferguson

Contemporary Books, Lincolnwood (Chicago), Illinois, 1999.

Take Two Plants is a good book for dreaming and planning, as well as one for doing some revision in the garden. Ferguson offers us seventeen categories of plant combinations, each comprising a chapter. Purple, red or bronze foliage is one chapter heading; plants for water gardens and damp and wet soils is another. Each page has a neat format including a color photo of two plants together, a summary of important information about each plant, and a few paragraphs which should convince the reader to combine those plants in the garden. Only a few of the suggested plants are very likely not hardy here in Southwestern Washington state, and some suggested varieties

may be more commonly available in the UK than here in the US. This book should be useful to gardeners who are looking for ways to improve the looks of their mixed borders – those combining shrubs and perennials.

Sunset's Gardening in the Northwest

Sunset Publishing Company, Menlo, CA, 2003.

An incredible picture book, that is actually so much more. This book starts out with an in-depth breakdown of the Northwest's climate zones, describing average temperature highs and lows, rainfall, and number of days in the growing season. It then highlights many well-known local gardens and their owners, finding out what influenced their planting decisions and how they use their garden space. There are pages that cover edible gardens, conifer beds, heaths & heathers, rock gardens, shade gardens, and more. It finishes up with a brief history of key gardeners in the Northwest, such as Lilla Leach and Rae Selling Berry, followed by a listing of specialty nurseries in the Northwest.