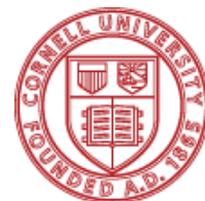




Book Gifts for Your Gardening and Nature Enthusiast

By Sue Gwise, *Consumer Horticulture Educator & Master Gardener Coordinator*



If you have a gardener in your life you may have noticed that winter can be difficult. We gardeners don't have anything to do but tend houseplants and plan for next season. I surveyed the Jefferson County Master Gardeners about their favorite gardening/nature books. What follows are their reviews and recommendations. Books on gardening make excellent holiday gifts and may help to pacify your gardener until spring!

Carol B. suggests:

The Well-Tended Perennial Garden: Planting and Pruning Techniques by Tracy DeSabato-Aust - *This book contains garden-proven, comprehensive advice on garden design and maintenance, which includes terrific photo demonstrations and great ideas to help you make the most of the perennials in your garden.*

Tracy has another book out: The Well-Designed Mixed Garden- *A well-organized, step by step explanation on garden design with exceptional diagrams and photos. This is a book written such that it is useful for the beginner gardener as well as the experienced gardener.*

Both of these books have incredible appendices - chock full of information. These appendices alone could qualify as books in and amongst themselves.

100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names, Diana Wells- *A homeopathic, historical, scientific, and mythological narrative of one hundred garden favorites. Every flower tells a story!*

Judy K. offers the following:

The American Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants. *I feel this is probably the most comprehensive, detailed, and lavishly illustrated garden guide ever published. It is easy to use and is fully informative from its comprehensive introduction to its glossary and great common name to botanical name cross reference index.*

Herbaceous Perennial Plants - A Treatise on their Identification, Culture and Garden Attributes by Allan M. Armitage - *Now in its third edition, I love this book as it has Allan's trademark wit and passion which are both in abundance, making reading as pleasurable as it is informative.*

Kathy S. has ranked her favorites:

1. The Living Landscape by Rick Darke and Douglas Tallamy - *A great, great guide and inspiration to rewilding our landscapes, extremely informative and illustrative.*
2. Planting in a Post-wild World by Thomas Rainer and Claudia West- *Eye-opening and informative with great solutions for native and ornamental plantings.*
3. The Layered Garden by David L Culp- *This book is beautifully photographed and inspirational. Even if you don't read it, it is a pleasure to leaf through but I read every single word!*
4. The Backyard Parables by Margaret Roach- *Not a garden how-to, but a great delve into the mind of gardening.*

Our commercial horticulture educator, Mike Nuckols, offered two suggestions for anyone thinking about growing vegetables to sell – but also vegetable gardeners with an interest in season extension. Elliot Coleman's The New Organic Grower provides comprehensive information on organic growing techniques,

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planning, and selling advice for market gardeners in the Northeast. The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year Round Vegetable Production Using Deep Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses is Coleman's follow-up. This extensive book addresses specific and cost-effective techniques that the author uses at his farm in Maine to extend vegetable harvests into the depths of winter, when retail prices are highest and availability is lowest.

As a book nerd, I also have to put in my 'two cents':

Bringing Nature Home, by University of Delaware Entomologist Douglas Tallamy is for the gardener that is interested in native plants. Tallamy stresses the importance of using native plants to support the entire ecosystem, from insects to birds. If you are a gardener that wants to attract pollinators and birds, this book is an eye opener to how things really interact in your own back yard. One of my Master Gardeners introduced me to this book saying, "It changed the way I garden!"

Native plant enthusiasts will love Native Plants of the Northeast by SUNY ESF Professor Don Leopold. This guide includes 700 species of trees, shrubs, vines, ferns, grasses and wildflowers indigenous to the northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada. Don has an encyclopedic knowledge of plants and this book reflects that knowledge. Information on each plant includes common and Latin names, zone hardiness, soil and light preferences, attributes, propagation and natural range. When I want to know if something is truly native, I turn to this book!

A more inspirational book, also written by a SUNY ESF Professor, is Braiding Sweetgrass, by Robin Kimmerer. As a member of the Potawatomi Nation, and a Distinguished Teaching Professor, Kimmerer looks at the plant world from two different points of view. Indigenous wisdom is contrasted with scientific knowledge. Beautifully written, each chapter is a testament to specific plants and Native American traditions of gratitude toward, and listening to, the natural world. This is a book to get lost in on a snowy day.

You may have heard the buzz about the Pulitzer Prize winning book by Richard Powers, The Understory. It's a work of fiction but it is packed with factual information about trees and forests. Barbara Kingsolver describes it as "a gigantic fable of genuine truths". My daughter and I continue to debate the hidden meanings in this book.

For those that appreciate forests, Nature's Temples by Joan Maloof dives into the complex world of old growth forests. This quick read will leave you in awe of these dwindling ecosystems.

Entangled Life by Merlin Sheldrake focuses on fungi and the important role they play in all ecosystems. Once classified as a sub-group of plants, fungi sometimes behave more like animals than plants! Although written by a brilliant biologist, this book is an ease to read. The world of fungi will astound you!

Gardening books are sure to soothe you and the gardener in your life until the growing season begins again!

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