

## **BOOKS ON GARDENING, 1600-1850**

The color of ripe tomatoes, the juicy tang of a peach, the green evenness of a lawn, the sweet scent of lilies and lilacs... Summer is the time for gardeners, and this exhibit celebrates the season with a selection of books on several different types of gardening.

From antiquity to the present, interest in gardens has generated a steady supply of books on plants, planting advice, and landscape design. This exhibit focuses on gardening in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, taking into account formal estate gardens, kitchen gardens, tree nurseries, and other plantings. Gardeners during this period ranged from aristocratic hobbyists and landowners to more the humbly born professional groundskeepers hired to manage estates both great and small. Hybridizers and botanists introduced exciting new varieties of fruits, vegetables, and flowers into gardens across the Europe and the Americas. In England, Figures like “Capability” Brown and Humphry Repton made names for themselves as landscape architects on a grand scale, while botanists and nurserymen like William Curtis and Leonard Meager contributed to the gardener’s stock of practical information on specific plants.

From the proper way to prune fruit trees to the fashionable layout of a great estate, these books record how gardeners selected, planned, and cared for their plantings. Viewers are invited to read, enjoy, and imagine the colors, flavors, sights and smells of summers long past.

## **THE KITCHEN GARDEN**

Kitchen gardens were the heart of rural food production, where everything from the tenderest peaches and plums to the hardiest cabbage and kale were grown. In large country estates, the kitchen garden was often a sizeable tract of land surrounded by brick walls. By today’s standards, all seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gardening was organic. The absence of pesticides, herbicides, Miracle-Grow and modern machinery meant that gardeners had to put a lot of energy and thought into making their plants thrive. Kitchen gardeners had to be experts in the care of a wide variety of food crops, and they developed a number of ingenious solutions to problems with climate, soils, and pests. These books offer planting instructions and advice for new and experienced gardeners dealing with a variety of challenges.

John Abercrombie (1726-1806). *The Complete Kitchen Gardener and Hot-Bed Forcer*. London: J. Stockdale, 1789.

Thomas Hitt (d. 1770). *A Treatise of Fruit-Trees*. London: Robinson and Roberts, 1768.

C. M. Hovey. *The Fruits of America*. Boston: Little, Brown: 1856.

Batty Langley (1696-1751). *Pomona; or, The Fruit Garden Illustrated*. London: G. Strahan, 1729.

## **THE FLOWER GARDEN**

Flowers have long been grown for cutting, for novelty, and for their useful properties. However, they were not always grown for their beauty. In the eighteenth century, William Mason, a poet and landscape gardener, revived interest in flower gardens and proposed growing them simply for the color and cheer they added to a view. His influential views ensured that flowers became an essential part of any formal garden.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the introduction of a number of new flowering plants as botanists and nurserymen identified foreign species and developed hybrids. Although color publications such as *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* remained popular through the period, most gardeners learned about new flowers through descriptions or black and white plates. Botanical gardens such as the Royal Gardens at Kew became popular spots for the public to see exotic and colorful plants in person.

William Curtis (1746-1799), and others. *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*. London: Academic Press, 1787-present.

Samuel Fullmer. *Young Gardener's Best Companion for the Thorough Practical Management of the Pleasure Ground and Flower Garden*. London: Seatcherd and Whitaker, 1781.

William Withering (1741-1799). *An Arrangement of British Plants According to the Latest Improvements of the Linnaean System*. Birmingham: M. Swinney, 1796.

Crispijn van de Passe (d. 1670). *Hortus Floridus* (The Flower Garden). Arnheimij: Ioannem Ianssonium, 1614.

## THE PARK

Garden design has changed dramatically from the formalized symmetry of Italian and French gardens to the informal plantings of today. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, English gardeners began to break away from the geometrical patterns called for in Renaissance knot gardens and Baroque parterres. Instead, the new garden style focused on creating bucolic, picturesque views that emulated landscape paintings. Emphasis was placed on the creation of broad, sweeping lawns, attractive groupings of trees, curving paths, and water features such as ponds and streams. Ornamental plantings were rigidly controlled and made to look as if they were natural features. Landscape architects during this period sought to shape the landscape without the outward appearance of control, creating "natural" scenery too perfect to exist in nature.

Humphry Repton (1752-1818). *Observations on the theory and practice of landscape gardening*. London: T. Bensley for J. Taylor, 1803.

Humphry Repton (1752-1818). *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*. London: T. Bensley for J. Taylor, 1816.

Leonard Meager (1624-1704). *The English Gardener; or, A Sure Guide to Young Planters and Gardeners*. London: P. Parker, 1670.

Thomas Whately (d. 1772). *Observations on Modern Gardening*. London: T. Payne, 1771.

Uvedale Price (1747-1849). *Essays on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful*. London: J. Mawman, 1810.

## THE FOREST

Due to widespread deforestation in the seventeenth century, plantations of hardwood trees became an important cash crop for large landowners. In order to supply the Navy and national public works with a steady supply of good, straight timber, landowners hired foresters and

nurserymen to oversee their plantings and make sure the trees were kept trimmed and in good health. Guides to forest and plantation management dealt not only with lumber trees, but also with the small ornamentals that would have been grown on the park-like pleasure grounds of a large estate.

John Evelyn (1620-1706). *Silva, or, A Discourse of Forest-Trees*. London: J. Walthoe, 1729.

Walter Nicol (d. 1811). *The Planter's Kalendar; or, The Nurseryman and Forester's Guide in the Operations of the Nursery, the Forest and the Grove*. Edinburgh: D. Willison for A. Constable, 1812.

Samuel Hayes. *A Practical Treatise on Planting, and the Management of Woods and Coppices*. Dublin: Wm. Sleater, 1794.

John Aikin (1747-1822). *The Woodland Companion; or, A Brief Description of British Trees*. London: J. Johnson, 1802.

Moses Cook. *The Manner of Raising, Ordering and Improving Forest-Trees*. London: E. Bell, 1724.