

# Book Reviews

THE FOLIAGE GARDEN: TAPESTRIES OF COLOR, SHAPE, AND TEXTURE. Becke Davis. 1998. Friedman/Fairfax Publishers, 15 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10010. <http://www.metro-books.com> 128 p. \$24.95, hardcover. ISBN 1-56799-365-6.

This book hit my desk just as I began to think about the spring gardening season. *The Foliage Garden: Tapestries of Color, Shape, and Texture* is definitely a feast for winter-weary eyes. It is richly illustrated with full-color photographs of the brilliance and subtleties found in landscape plant materials. It challenges the imagination. While we are accustomed to looking at woody plants with their fall color in mind, Davis reminds us that many of the herbaceous plants used in gardens provide texture, color and shape. She reminds us of the leaf and plant form, the ornamental value of bark and berries, and the winter interest of many plants. She challenges the reader to look beyond flower color and form. This is a book for those gardeners and practitioners who are looking for concepts beyond the mass of flower color.

The book is divided into nine chapters: A close-up look at leaves (basic leaf morphology), Bud break: The leaves of spring (an examination of the texture and appearance of new young growth and how to take advantage of it), Stars of summer (contrasts of texture and color in herbaceous and woody ornamental plants including ornamental grasses and bulbs), Foliage in autumn (the contrasts of autumn colors with bark and evergreens), A winter wonderland (a lesson in bark, berries and other persistent fruits, winter flowers and garden hardscape elements), Conifers as ornamentals (blues, gold-tones and structure), Variegated foliage (reds, pinks, yellows, creams, greens and the

play of sunlight on foliage), Foliage plants with a purpose (co-mingling of culinary herbs and ornate vegetables in the landscape, use of fragrance from flowers and foliage, and foliage plants in the water garden), and Weird and wonderful (succulents, carnivorous plants, ferns and topiaries). In each chapter, Davis provides plant lists appropriate to the topic and some simple garden plans (complete with planting lists).

Typical of many gardening books, there are recommendations on plant selection that are not appropriate to different regions of the North American Continent. While the author's gardening experience is limited to colder northern climates (Chicago and Cincinnati), the horticultural practitioner and/or advanced gardener can easily adapt the concepts and plant lists for other regions of the United States. While she might make a recommendation of placing a plant under full sun conditions in Chicago, the experienced gardener would need to put their experience to work and place that plant in afternoon shade in Atlanta. But then, that's fairly common when using other books and resources.

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WEEDS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA. 1998. Southern Weed Science Society, 1508 West University Ave., Champaign, IL 61821-3313. \$120, CD-ROM for Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows NT or higher.

*Weeds of the United States and Canada* is an excellent reference and weed identification guide. It offers

several features such as a interesting taxonomy tutorial and a presentation feature that are not readily available in other CD-ROMs or books. The CD-ROM is easy to start—just place it in your CD drive. It does not have to be installed on your hard drive. Even through it is running from a CD drive, its response is still very fast. The only limitation was that the CD-ROM requires specific monitor settings, which eliminates using some monitors or cause the picture not to fill the screen of others.

*Weeds of the United States and Canada* is logically organized and easy to follow. It provides a brief overview and a tutorial if your knowledge of taxonomy needs to be improved. The other choices of the CD-ROM's menu include a glossary, species listings, and a presentation section. The species covered are extensive, including most common weeds found in North America. The species listings can be searched using characteristics of an unknown weed, or by plant family, scientific and common names. The glossary and articles from the *Intriguing World of Weeds* provide interesting information about many of the weeds.

The tutorial is fun and interesting, although it is probably most useful for undergraduate students, horticulturists, crop consultants, and extension advisors without an extensive background in weed science. Parts of the tutorial are good reviews of common vegetative and reproductive structures important in identifying unknown plants. I only had a few minor complaints with the tutorial. The information on weed habitats (urban, aquatic, desert, etc.) is too simplistic. It should include information on niches and species adaptation to specific environments. Why are the same species not found throughout a particular habitat? There should be multiple examples of weeds within each habitat and more pictures (instead of drawings) of plants that have particular structures important for identification. All pictures used in the tutorial or glossary need labeling and arrows pointing out the structure. The tutorial contains quizzes and exams, which are excellent learning tools but should be linked to areas where the answer to the question was discussed.

The heart of the *Weeds of the United States and Canada* is the sec-

tion on weed species. Overall the picture quality is very good and the identifying characteristics of the weeds are easy to see. The only place where I had problems with picture quality were with the seed pictures. Sometimes it was hard to make out details of the seed because of background. Generally seed characteristics are not important for weed identification. The CD-ROM emphasizes emerging and seedling stages which are important for identification of annual weeds in agricultural settings. For the perennial weeds more pictures of plants emerging from underground structures should be shown. The descriptions of individual species are good but standard. The maps indicating species range are much too general. They should indicate where the weed is most commonly found not just where it might occur.

I was happy that this CD-ROM included a glossary and Larry Mitch's *Intriguing World of Weeds* series of articles from *Weed Technology*. You can go directly to the *Intriguing World of Weeds* articles or access them from the page of an individual species. There also should be a link from an *Intriguing World of Weeds* article to pictures of the specific weeds. The second important source of additional information is the glossary. Overall the definitions are clear and easy to understand. The links between terms within the glossary and from other parts of the CD-ROM to the glossary save time and are a definite advantage over competing books such as the *Weeds of the Northeast* or *Weeds of the West*.

*Weeds of the United States and Canada* is a welcome addition to the libraries or reference shelves of many horticulturists, especially those with an interest in botany or weed science. Its price, requirement for licenses for each computer it is used on, and emphasis on weed identification might limit its use as a textbook. But we have come a long way from the line drawings of the USDA's *Selected Weeds of the United States*.

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JAPANESE FLOWERING CHERRIES. Wybe Kuitert with Arie Peterse, and Foreword by Roy Lancaster. 1999. Timber Press, Inc.; 133 S.W. Second Avenue; Suite 450; Portland, OR 97204-3527. 395 p.; 118 color photos; 29 color illustrations; 41 b/w illustrations; hardcover \$39.95 plus shipping. ISBN 0-88192-468-7.

If you are seeking a quality and specialized book packed with information about Japanese flowering cherries, this may be the one. The price is reasonable for a book with so much information. I like the book because it is comprehensive; including the natural and cultural history, and the cultivation, propagation, observation, and classification of the Japanese flowering cherries. In addition, there are extensive and detailed chapters on the Japanese Wild Cherries and the Garden Cherries. The information is arranged in a logical manner for me; that of general to specific.

The Preface addresses the complex and sometimes confusing cherry nomenclature; an issue which resurfaces in other sections of the book. The author provides resource tools in the appendices including a metric system table with conversions, cherry names in Japanese showing the Roman, Phonetic, and Japanese Characters; a glossary of standard terms and a bibliography. Most species and cultivars are illustrated with high quality color photographs which, when used with the observation characters and the classification key, help an individual identify one of the cherries. Although the key is not exhaustive, many of the more common species and cultivars are included. Interesting and helpful illustrations from woodblock prints, drawings, catalog offerings, and maps of Japan showing plant distribution are sprinkled throughout the book.

I enjoyed the author's occasional different (than I would choose) choice of words to describe a situation. For example, in discussing cherries in the hot and humid Japanese summers, the author writes, "Infestations of plant lice, caterpillars, and bugs shave many cherry trees in this season."

This specialized book should be most useful to horticulturists focusing on woody plants, small flowering trees, and landscape design. I think college faculty who teach plant identification

and the use of woody plants should place this book on supplemental reading or resource lists for their students. The book is a must for anyone with a collection of cherries and especially for libraries of arboreta and other public horticultural institutions. The one thing which I would like to have seen in the book is a list of public gardens which have special collections of Japanese flowering cherries.

I am pleased to have this high quality book in my library. I recommend you take a look at it.

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THE FIELD GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHING GARDENS. Allen Rokach and Anne Millman. 1998. Amphoto Books, A Division of BPI Communications, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. 128 p. 150 color photographs. \$16.95 Softcover. ISBN 0-8174-3876-9.

This handy little guide covers the different aspects of capturing gardens on film. The authors have many useful suggestions for creating stunning photos. The text is written in active and nontechnical voice, making it an easy-to-read how-to book for students, growers, and scientists. This inexpensive book has many breathtaking photographs, offers some very creative ways of looking at ornamentals, and is small enough to tuck into a camera bag.

The book is divided into sections on equipment, lighting, composition, and color. The photos illustrate several famous gardens, including many of international fame. Situations encountered by tourists or weekend photographers, from catching the dramatic flair of Holland's Keukenhof Garden to capturing the essence of individual garden flowers. The authors' coverage of composition is particularly excellent and provides simple and clear instruction on how and what was accomplished in the photos. Additionally, all photos are labeled with geographic location, camera, lens, and exposure used. This book most likely will appeal to the ornamental horticulturist, although all camera enthusi-

asts would benefit from the instruction.

Most of the photos are created with single-lens reflex cameras. Having personally evolved over the years to using a highly portable point-and-shoot camera, I wish there had been more photos created with this type of camera. Although experience has shown me that point-and-shoot cameras just can't achieve the same quality as larger-format types, I would have appreciated some photos showing what could be done with this equipment.

I found the text was in a print so small as to make reading a challenge, especially in low-light conditions like planes and autos. The authors also spend little time on capturing fall colors, much to my disappointment. Who has not thought that the brilliant reds and oranges of New England foliage were captured on film only to find the photos a muted disappointment?

All in all, this inexpensive paperback provides an excellent value and should be used as a technical resource for amateur photographers.

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THE GARDEN PLANTS OF CHINA. Peter Valder. 1999. Timber Press, 133 S.W. Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204. 400 p. \$49.95 + S&H, hardcover. 420 color photos. ISBN 0-88192-470-9.

I wish that *The Garden Plants of China* was available before my visit there last year as part of the ASHS People-to-People Horticultural Study Tour. It would have helped to understand the role of plants in everyday life, the history and symbolism of plant use, the conflict that sometimes exists between culture of edible and ornamental plants, and the richness and diversity of plants native to China.

The importance of plants originating in China to worldwide ornamental horticulture is immense. Consider the universal appeal of such plants as the tree and herbaceous peonies, camellia, wisteria, flowering peach, crabapple, lilac, azalea, gardenia, and a host of others. Of these, chrysanthemum,

is one of the leading cut flower and potted plants commercially grown in the world today. It was a particular favorite of the Confucian scholars and, together with the flowering plum, orchid, and bamboo, came to be known as one of the Four Gentlemen of Flowers.

The bulk of the book is devoted to chapters on individual plants, e.g., roses or groups of similar plants such as apricots, peaches, plums, and cherries. These 17 chapters are preceded by introductory chapters on Chinese horticulture, ornamental plants in Chinese culture, and introduction of Chinese garden plants to other countries. The arrangement of the plant chapters is unique beginning with the conifers and following with plants of the seasons based primarily on the order of blooming or use for ornament. Valdes believed that this approach would take into consideration Chinese sensibilities concerning the progression of the year.

Information that is provided for each plant includes family affiliation, binomial, Chinese characters, phonetic Chinese pronunciation and western name. This is followed by a brief or lengthy statement, depending on the plant, that encompasses the history, taxonomy, and its place in Chinese culture. Almost every plant is featured in lavish, full color in a typical garden scene.

Readers will expect the book to focus on ornamental plants—and it does. But edible horticulture is not ignored. For example, the chapter Wisteria and other Vines provides much useful and interesting information on kiwi fruit, watermelon, sweet potato, bottle gourd, and grape.

A glossary of botanical terms enhances the value of the book for those who are unfamiliar with them or those who may have forgotten them. The book is well referenced with original literature sources and very well indexed, which makes it easy to find information on specific plants.

Many horticulturists, including those with a particular interest in Chinese horticulture and in the history of plants, will want to have a personal copy of this book. It comes highly recommended from this reviewer.

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NUTRIENT USE IN CROP PRODUCTION. Zdenko Rengel (ed.). 1998. Food Products Press, 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, New York 13904-1580. 267 p. \$49.95 hardcover. ISBN 1-56022-061-9.

The book has 10 chapters, most of which complement each other nicely. I found Chapter 1, Population Growth, Food Production and Nutrient Requirement, very informative. The authors (B.H. Byrnes and B.L. Bumb) did an excellent job showing the challenge we face over the next 20 years in producing enough food and fiber to keep pace with projected world population growth. These authors outline the unique opportunities and challenges for each region of the world. They make the case that declining soil fertility is an important reason for falling production in certain regions. The authors of this chapter also make the point that the use of fertilizer has actually contributed to resource preservation and biodiversity. By increasing production per unit area we have not had to bring as many forest and grasslands into production.

Chapter 2, Managing Soil Fertility Decline, authored by L.C. Campbell, nicely follows up on topics covered in Chapter 1. This chapter briefly summarizes principles of soil fertility. Along with Chapter 1, this chapter makes the case that much of the fertility decline is policy related and it is increasingly urgent that agricultural scientists weigh in on these policy decisions.

Chapter 3, Soil and Plant Testing Programs as a Tool for Optimizing Fertilizer Strategies, authored by P.J. Van Erp and M.L. Van Beusichem, summarizes the current state of the science of soil and plant testing and the possibilities of moving beyond our current empirical approach in the future. Although nearly all the information presented in this chapter has been covered before, it was a useful compliment to the other chapters in this book. In Chapter 4, Comparative Assessment of the Efficacy of Nitrogen Fertilizers, author F. Wiesler has compiled an excellent up-to-date review of N recoveries and mechanisms of N loss. This chapter could have included more discussion on technologies aimed at improved N fertilizer use efficiency such as nitrification inhibitors, urease inhibitors, and controlled release fertilizers. Chapter 5, The Role of Nitrogen Fixation in Crop Production, by G.W. O'

Hara, summarizes current trends and future opportunities to more fully biological N contribution.

Chapter 6, *The Chemistry and Agronomic Effectiveness of Phosphate Fertilizers*, authored by M.D.A. Bolland and R.J. Gilkes, briefly reviews factors influencing the availability of P, including fertilizer formulation, soil reactions, and crop characteristics. This chapter had an excellent review on using phosphate rock as a P fertilizer. This section would be useful to those engaged in organic farming research where phosphate rock is one of the few options available. This chapter would have been more complete if it had included a brief review and discussion of P fertilizer placement issues. Chapter 7, *Micronutrient Fertilizers*, by L.M. Shuman, is a brief review of factors affecting micronutrient availability. Chapter 8, *Delivering Fertilizers Through Seed Coatings*, by J.M. Scott, covers limitations and opportunities to delivering fertilizer nutrients in seedcoats. This chapter had information I had not seen elsewhere.

Chapter 9, *Nutrient Management, Cultivar Development, and Selection Strategies to Optimized Water Use Efficiency*, by J.G. Davis and J.S. Quick, was a brief review of factors that interact to influence water use efficiency. Chapter 10, *The Role of Nutrient Efficient Crops in Modern Agriculture*, by J. Lynch, is outstanding. This chapter defines nutrient efficiency and discusses the varying implications of nutrient efficient crops in differing cropping systems. For example, in high-value cropping situations, yield increases would not be a likely outcome since factors other than nutrients are limiting production. In these scenarios, the goal would be a reducing of nutrient inputs while maintaining of yield and profitability of production. Conversely, in situations of subsistence farming the goal would be to develop genotypes with improved yield under nutrient limited conditions. The author concludes this chapter with brief discussions on opportunities and challenges for improving crop nutrient efficiency. The author makes the case that geneticist have done a outstanding job of exploiting insect and disease resistance in their breeding programs, but have been far less aggressive in exploiting the opportunities for enhancing nutrient efficiency.

An important area that did not

receive enough attention in this book was fertilizer application methods. For example, the application of nutrients with irrigation water (fertigation), particularly through pressurized irrigation systems, has proven to be an efficient means of delivering nutrients in many crop production systems. Foliar application of both macronutrients and micronutrients is another area that has been researched extensively and should have been addressed in greater detail in this book.

Near the beginning of the book is a note that *Nutrient Use in Crop Production* was published simultaneously as an issue in the *Journal of Crop Production*. I do not understand the reason for simultaneous publication.

I do not know what type of course this could be used as a text book. However, the book has a number of useful statistics and up to date literature reviews on a number of subjects related to soil fertility. The authors of the individual chapters come from around the globe giving the book a diverse array of international perspectives. I enjoyed reading the book and will find some of the statistics useful in my grant writing endeavors. The book would be a useful addition to every library, unless that library already has the same information in the *Journal of Crop Production*. The book is relatively inexpensive and may also be useful to those working in the area of soil fertility.

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PESTS OF THE GARDEN AND SMALL FARM. A GROWER'S GUIDE TO USING LESS PESTICIDE. 2nd ed. Mary Louise Flint. 1999. UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Communication Services-Publications, Publication Number 3332, 6701 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA 94608-1239. 276 p., 250 color photographs, 100 black and white drawings and photographs. \$35.00 softcover. ISBN 1-879906-40-6.

The second edition of *Pests of the Garden and Small Farm* has been completely reviewed and substantially revised since the publication of the first edition in 1990. According to the author Mary Louise Flint, director of IPM Education and Publications, Statewide

Integrated Pest Management Project, and Extension Entomologist, Department of Entomology, University of California, it is the goal of this publication to bring to home gardener, organic and very small diversified growers instructions on how to bring the integrated pest management (IPM) philosophy and IPM methods into their smaller scale and/or organic growing situations for use against specific problem pests. The book is designed to help gardeners and small farmers protect their vegetables and fruits from pests with minimum use of pesticides, especially the more toxic synthetic materials. Although the main focus of the book is on food producing plants, most methods can also be adapted to manage pests on ornamentals.

The book is divided into seven chapters, an appendix, references, a glossary, and an index. The first chapter contains a brief introduction into what the reader can expect to find in the book. The second chapter, *Designing a Pest Management Program*, provides the reader with a broad understanding of the concepts of IPM. In this chapter one will find subjects such as crop development in relation to pest management, components of a successful pest management program, soils and nutrition, water management, sanitation, crop rotation, soil solarization, reflective mulches, plant cages, rowcovers and other pest barriers, intercropping, companion planting, cover crops, biological control and pesticides. Each subject is well covered and accompanied by either excellent photographs, illustrations or tables.

The third chapter, *Common Insects, Mites, Other Arthropods, Snails and Slugs*, will provide the reader with the crops attacked, the appearance of the damage, identification of the pest, where to look for the pest, other monitoring tips and discussion of different control strategies that can be employed. Some of the major insect pest groupings in this chapter are leaf- and fruit-feeding caterpillars, caterpillars affecting fruit and nut trees, common caterpillar pests in vegetable gardens, borers, leaf- and fruit feeding beetles, stink bugs, lygus bugs, and other true bugs, leafhoppers, aphids, scale insects, mealybugs, whiteflies, mites, other arthropods, and snails and slugs. The color photographs are excellent of the insects (also included are nice line drawings), parasites that may attack them,

and damage caused by the insects. These excellent photographs will be very helpful to the user in identifying the insect pest and the parasites that feed on them.

The fourth chapter, Diseases, discusses some major diseases that will be encountered by the home gardener and small grower. Some of the diseases include damping-off, seed and seedling decay, powdery mildew, downy mildew, brown rot in stone fruit, phytophthora brown rot of citrus, gray mold and bunch rot, common smut of corn, bacterial soft rots of vegetables, shot hole, leaf curl, bacterial canker and blast, apple scab, pear scab, viruses, vascular wilts, phytophthora root and crown rot, armillaria root rot, and crown gall. As in the preceding chapter on insects, the diseases are divided into symptoms, biology, and management practices. There are also excellent color photographs of the diseases that will be a value tool to any gardener or grower in helping them make a positive identification of disease problems in their crops. The book can travel right to the garden or field.

In the fifth chapter, the reader is presented with excellent information on nematodes. The symptoms and damage, life cycle, and management for the root-knot nematodes and several less common root feeding nematodes are discussed. There are some excellent photographs, tables and line drawings that the reader will find very useful.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to the third major pest of the home garden and small-farm weeds. This chapter contains some general weed management strategies and then presents some of the more common weed pests with a description, color photograph and suggestions for management of that weed.

The seventh chapter contains the specific crop tables starting with artichokes and ending with walnuts for a total of 16 individual or family of vegetables and 18 fruit and nut crops. Each crop table contains three headings—what the problem looks like, probable cause and comments. Under comments it may refer the reader back to a specific page in the book or to another publication.

In the Appendix the reader will find Using Degree-Days for Predicting Growth and Development of Crops and Invertebrate Pests, which will be very useful since temperature is very important in controlling not only the

rate of development of crop plants but many pests, especially insects.

The References are organized by chapters and in alphabetical order by author which provides the reader the opportunity to pursue a particular subject further if they have an interest or feel they need additional information to assist them in managing a pest in their garden or farm.

The Glossary includes the definitions of some common terms associated with IPM. The last section in the book is the index.

This is well written and organized book that is a must for the serious home gardener, organic and diversified small farmer. It will be an invaluable tool in helping to develop ones own integrated pest management program.

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THE GARDEN TOURIST 1999. GUIDE TO GARDENS, GARDEN TOURS, SHOWS AND SPECIAL EVENTS. Lois G. Rosenfeld. 1999. The Garden Tourist Press, 330 West 72nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10023. 252 p. Softcover \$18.90 + S&H. ISBN 0-9639082-7-8.

This book by Lois Rosenfeld describes and lists over 440 gardens throughout the United States and nine provinces in Canada. All garden and special gardening events are cataloged by state or province and then further broken down by specific gardens and special events. There are all types of gardens listed in this book, from small private or estate plantings consisting of a couple of acres to large public parks and gardens covering extensive acreage. Some are free; some request a donation; and others have an entrance fee.

Each garden has at least one paragraph describing it along with a phone number; daily hours that it is open; the amount of the entrance fee if one is required; and a description on how to find it. Many of the gardens have web sites that are excellent. The ones I visited had maps that you could download and print as well as all types of activity descriptions along with color photos of theme gardens and some-

times specific plant material. Many also had near-by-lodging sites and some even had a list of airlines that serviced the area, example: the Biltmore House near Ashville, N.C. There are more than 300 web pages, ranging from one page long up to 20 pages. Most gardens also have e-mail addresses.

All states also had numerous gardening events throughout the spring and summer that should be of interest to most gardeners. A description and the dates come along with each event. Specific addresses are given to obtain additional information. Most events also have their sponsor listed as well as the theme of the activity.

Another section of the book lists ten suggested gardening tours or vacations for various times during the 1999 growing season throughout North America. The book also describes some foreign tours throughout the world along with their dates; various flower shows by state and month; and finally, it also has a page of useful garden books. The book itself has a web site-www.gardenalendar.com where the author can update various garden events that may have changed after the book was printed.

All in all, I found this to be a potentially very useful and user-friendly book. This is its eighth year of revision and publication. If I had any complaints or suggestions, it would be that many times the author refers you, the reader, to Guide to Gardens for a specific state such as Washington Guide to Gardens for Bellevue garden near Seattle. I know this is probably not the author's fault, but it does really hamper the reader from obtaining information rapidly for those particular gardens; and there are gardens similar to this in almost every state. Thus, one would be required to write the state capital city and request the Guide to Gardens book for their particular state in order to obtain all the necessary information.

Other than this minor complaint, I found this book to be a very nice reference to have as well as having fun visiting the various garden web sties. This book will be especially useful to home gardeners, nursery people, designers, and educators.

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## Books in Brief

by *Donald N. Maynard*

GARDENER'S GUIDE TO GROWING ASTERS. Paul Picton. 1999. Timber Press, 133 S.W. Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. 160 p. 86 color photos. hardcover, \$29.95 + S&H. ISBN 0-88192-473-3.

Asters are particularly popular for their late-summer/fall bloom time, their bright colors in the white-pink-purple range, and their starlike shape. The vast majority of asters are native to North America, though some are natives of Europe and Asia with a few from South Africa and South America. There are more than 250 species worldwide, and most species in cultivation are herbaceous perennials, though a few species are annuals, biennials, and shrubs.

Picton begins by discussing their botany and the history of asters in cultivation. Then, focusing on the autumn-flowering herbaceous perennials, he moves to describing particular species. A significant portion of the book is devoted to the New York aster (*Aster novi-belgii*): its nomenclature and breeding history, availability, and cultivation tips. The same is done for the New England aster (*Aster noviangliae*), small-flowered asters, *Aster amellus*, *Aster x frikartii*, *Aster laevis*, and others.

SUNLIGHT ON THE LAWN. Beverly Nichols. 1999. Timber Press, 133 S.W. Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. 273 p. hardcover, \$24.95 + S&H. ISBN 0-88192-467-9.

*Sunlight on the Lawn*, the third

book in the Merry Hall trilogy, ties together the finished product of house and garden at the author's Georgian manor, Merry Hall. The well-established characters give their final appearances in Nichols' delightful descriptions. The forward, provided by Nichols' biographer, Bryan Connon, reveals the identities of many of the friends and neighbors on which the fictional characters are based.

Nichols' unique mixture of fact, humor, and whimsical invention continues to charm readers on both sides of the Atlantic. In this, the last volume of the trilogy, readers can sit back and enjoy the fruits of Nichols' labor while diving more deeply into the lives of the characters that pass through.

PLANTFINDERS GUIDE TO CACTI AND OTHER SUCCULENTS. Keith Grantham and Paul Klaassen. 1999. Timber Press, 133 S.W. Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. 192 p. 106 color photos. hardcover, \$34.95 + S&H. ISBN 0-88192-425-3.

Succulents are those plants with thick and fleshy stems or leaves that are designed to retain water and minimize evaporation. They are primarily found in the arid and semiarid areas of the world, although some are even found in rainforests. Despite the similarities of construction that make them all succulents, families such as the Cactaceae include very diverse forms.

Grantham and Klaassen cover prehistoric fossil evidence, the history of succulents in cultivation, their worldwide origins, the adaptations that have developed to cope with arid climates, and propagation. The chapter on the proper care of succulents discusses light, temperature, watering, nutrition, and dealing with pests and diseases.

Interested in photographing gardens? Read our guide on how to take the best close-up pictures possible....<sup>^</sup> Gardens offer vast scope for close-ups, whether it be a frosted blade of grass, a honey bee sucking nectar or flowers at their peak. However, before taking a close-up of a flower or leaf there are a few things to consider: <sup>^</sup> First check that it is fresh and without blemishes.<sup>^</sup> If a distracting backdrop is unavoidable, blur it by selecting a shallow depth of field. In this instance, focusing must be very accurate, and any wind movement will cause fuzziness, so be patient and wait for a still moment. You must also always consider the quality of light <sup>^</sup> it is absolutely critical. Whereas fantastic light can transform an insipid subject, lifeless light can kill dead the most wondrous of sights.