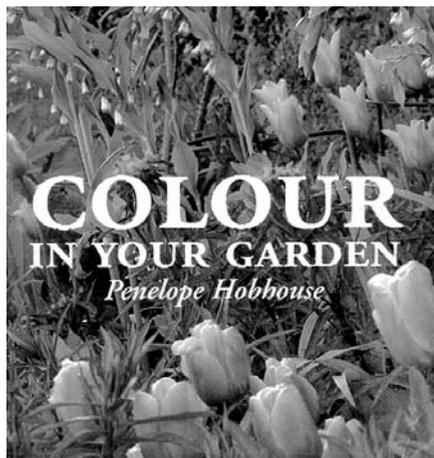


# Book Reviews

A selection of the best book reviews of 2004 of interest to horticulturists, compliments of the *Weekend Gardener* magazine. Part 1 of 2.

## Colour in Your Garden

Penelope Hobhouse  
Frances Lincoln, distributed by  
Bookwise. NZ\$63.95



THE common denominator of all our gardens is, of course, colour. While many successful gardeners seem to know intuitively “what goes with what”, for others planting is a hit-and-miss affair based on fancy rather than forethought. But no matter which school you belong to, this large-format book is a lavish eye-opener, showing how to design a garden using plant colour as the fundamental element. For the technically minded there’s an intriguing chapter on the nature of colour. This probes the relationships of light to colour, colour to space, and the way various colours can “enhance or injure” one another.

While *Colour in Your Garden* is crammed with ideas, there’s also lots of practical snippets. “Don’t plant a colour scheme which depends on golden foliage in full sun; most plants of this type of leaf covering need shade...” and “don’t feed variegated plants with rich food; their leaves will form new chlorophyll and become green” are typical hints.

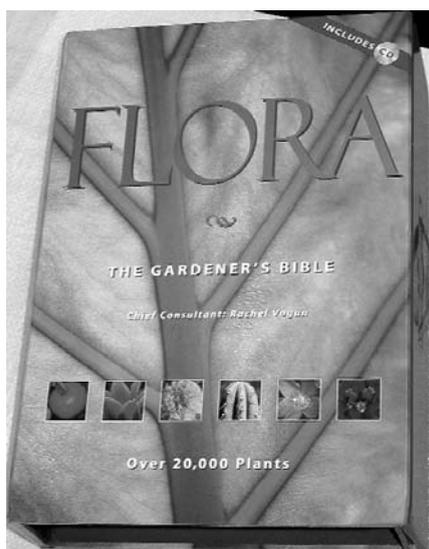
More than 1000 plants are catalogued under colours. Blooms – whites, clear yellow, blue, pinks and mauve, strong red and so on – are described season by season.

The plants’ habit, relationship with plants of different colour and growing conditions are also considered. *Colour in Your Garden* offers the serious gardener a new perspective and gives the novice a kaleidoscope of ideas to kick off with.

*Weekend Gardener*, Issue 138, 2004, Page 28

## Flora – The Gardener’s Bible

Chief NZ consultant: Rachel Vogan  
David Bateman Ltd. NZ\$140-\$195



THIS is the gardening blockbuster of the year – an encyclopaedia whose sheer volume relegates other botanical reference books to the shade. Comprehensive and pertinently illustrated, *Flora* contains information on more than 20,000 of the world’s plants.

Most of the entries are for annuals, perennials, flowering shrubs and landscape trees, but coverage also includes bulbs, corms, tubers, bamboos, bromeliads, cacti, succulents, climbers, creepers, cycads, palms, ferns, grasses, orchids, herbs, fruits and vegetables.

The introduction outlines the differences of plant groups and hardiness zones, but the primary arrangement is an A-Z by scientific name. Genera are introduced with

descriptions of their common physical characteristics, diversity, ranges and cultivation requirements. Species entries note the synonyms, common names, sun aspect, hardiness, spread and height of each plant. Also described are the places of origin, flowering season and colour, as well as horticultural uses.

Award-winning plants are noted for gardeners and more than 10,000 colour photos illustrate the entries.

A complementary CD offers alternative approaches to the text, particularly by plant groups and uses. A “plant chooser” allows the user to select plants by hardiness zones, flower colour, height, sun position and use. Other features include links to web-sites and a spell-checker for botanical names.

A word of warning, the single volume is a seriously heavy (as in weighty) book. For ease of reference think about buying one of the two-volume works.

Flora’s recommended retail prices are \$140 for the single volume; 2-volume set \$150; 2-volume deluxe edition \$195.

*Weekend Gardener*, Issue 138, 2004, Page 28

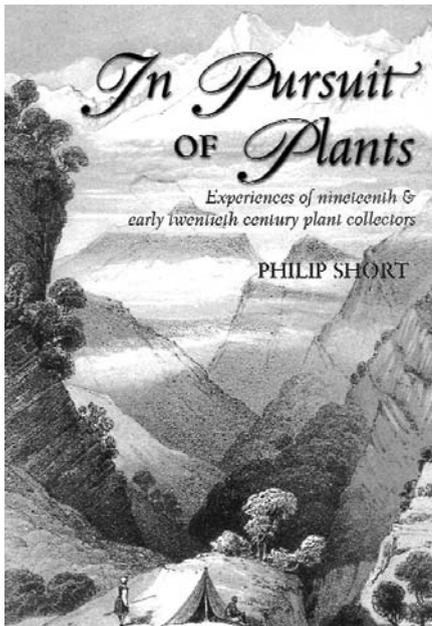
## In Pursuit of Plants

**Experiences of nineteenth & early twentieth century plant collectors**

Philip Short  
UWA Press, distributed by Addenda Ltd. NZ\$59.95

ALTHOUGH the pursuit of taxonomy may seem prosaic, the adventures of the early plant collectors’ make a rip-roaring read.

In Surinam, plant hunter F.W. Hostman allowed vampire bats to suck blood from his toes, in West Africa William Grant Milne was forced to sell his clothes and travel naked for 200 miles and in Fiji, Berthold Seemann discovered what type of taro cannibals preferred as a side-dish to human flesh.



These sagas and others are compiled by Australian taxonomist Philip Short and leavened with first-hand accounts from the collectors' diaries and memoirs.

There's a nod to New Zealand's botanical history; missionary and plant gatherer William Colenso's 1845 trek to the North Island hinterland is portrayed, with Colenso's amusing early encounter with the vicious, thorny species that now bears his name, *Alsophila colensoi*.

Australia's plant-probing explorers R.W. Lawrence, James Drummond, Ludwig Leichhardt, Ferdinand Mueller and others are given plenty of mileage and deservedly so.

As Leichhardt's demise shows – he and his party disappeared without trace in 1848 while attempting an east-west crossing – Australia was anything but the lucky country for some who charted our botanical heritage.

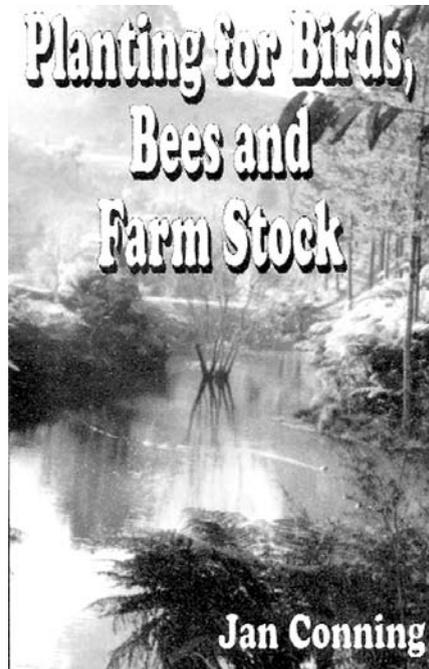
*In Pursuit of Plants* includes a balanced mix of historical prints and recent photography that adds to this riveting read.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 139, 2004, Page 28*



### Planting for Birds, Bees & Farm Stock

Jan Conning  
RD 6, Tauranga.  
NZ\$34.95



AN impetuous plunge into a lifestyle block can skittle dreams and dent the bank balance beyond recognition. Here then are some pointers to the recipe for success. Whether the holding is 60 acres, like the author's, or a sixth that size, realising a rural idyll demands enthusiasm, tenacity and patience.

Judging by her self-published account, Jan Conning has these qualities in abundance. When Jan and her husband Bill bought an untamed Bay of Plenty block it already supported a wealth of wildlife. The book describes the steps they took to enhance this habitat, particularly for birdlife, by planting and nurturing suitable trees and what they learnt as they forged on.

*Planting for Birds, Bees and Farm Stock* reads more like a neighbourly chat over the boundary fence than a 10-acre block primer. However, if the author has found something successful – whether tree type, tips on raiding ducklings or weedmat brand – she lets you know about it. At 95-pages, it's relatively brief, but you'll come away with a dose of vitality peppered with practical hints.

A useful introduction for new rural recruits and enough "how-to" to absorb the rest of us.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 139, 2004, Page 28*

### Small Gardens for modern living

Hamlyn, distributed by Bookwise  
NZ\$39.95



LIKE it or not, the shrinking garden is, for many urban gardeners, a reality. Time constraints and greater urban density sees gardeners' horizons shrinking and this is a timely manual.

Clearly laid out, *Small Gardens for Modern Living* ticks off aspects of gardening on a minor scale. Planning, enhancing space, hard landscaping materials, walls, water features and so on are explored with each chapter embellished with practical information; points to remember and plant guides.

There are clear, step-by-step projects to embark on – one that will capture readers' interest is a "leaf fountain" – a clever cascade fashioned from copper which would grace any garden, large or small. Other projects include making trellis; a turf seat; a topiary bird; and a "fedge" (as the name suggests a cross between a fence and a hedge). Detailed planting guides are a useful sidebar to most chapters.

Rooftop and basement gardens also get the once over. And if you're scratching your head over keeping the kids from going stir crazy in your miniature backyard, the final chapter is well worth a look.

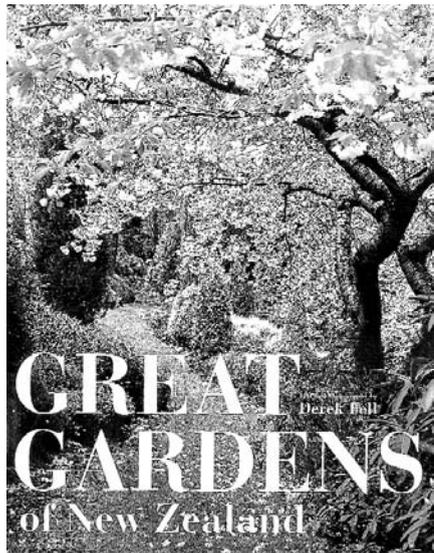
Hands-on, exhaustive and superbly illustrated, this lavish handbook deserves a close look from the growing ranks of spatially-challenged gardeners.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 139, 2004, Page 28*

### Great Gardens of New Zealand

Derek Fell

David Bateman Ltd. NZ\$59.95



INTERNATIONAL author Derek Fell needs little introduction to New Zealand gardeners. The Pennsylvania-based garden writer counts the Ellerslie Flower Show among the many he's judged and lectured at and this book is the fruit of research and photographs amassed here over a 10-year period. Many of the gardens will be familiar to readers from magazine pages, but they deserve this fresh perspective.

Among these are long-standing gems such as Ayrilies. Bev McConnell's Whitford estate is dubbed Auckland's finest woodland and water garden and Fell's photos attest to that.

The first and last gardens in this north to south odyssey also grab attention: Lindo and Laetitia Ferguson's 33-year labour of love on Northland's historic Butler Point and the delights of Stewart Island with its Garden Circle – "NZ's smallest garden club".

As well as the traditional, Fell has an eye for the avant garde. The 35 or so gardens he visits include the eclectic retreat of Christchurch's Robyn Kilty and Otago artist Lindsay

Crooks' Brighton beachside haven, a backdrop to his whimsical sculpture.

Fells says he wanted his gardens to be distinctive, reflect the extraordinary enthusiasm New Zealanders have for gardening, and represent all climatic regions.

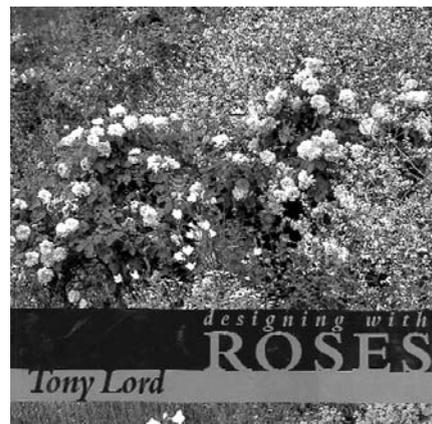
This reasonably-priced book will be a compulsory addition to many readers' shelves.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 140, 2004, Page 28*

### Designing with Roses

Tony Lord

distributed by Bookwise. NZ\$54.95



THIS is the paperback version of Tony Lord's attractive and useful book, which has been available in hardback since 1999. An English horticulturist and writer, Lord's passion for "the queen of flowers" drives *Designing with Roses*. In pushing the versatility of roses "for almost every garden" (he allows that the genus has been frequently misused) Lord's practical aesthetic covers 200 pages of scintillating pictures and informative text. There's detailed information on shape, colour, scent, foliage, immunity levels, form and flowering times. Lord writes for a wide readership, taking into account local climates and native plants. There are chapters on Roses for Structure, Roses as Punctuation, Roses in Mixed Borders and Roses for Wild Gardens.

At the end of the book is a gem for growers – Lord's "pick of the bunch". We get groupings of roses for ground cover, bush roses (short and tall), shrub roses, climbing, roses for arcades, pergolas and catenaries, roses for autumn colour,

roses for bedding and so on, in all 13 pages capped by 27 roses that "should be more widely grown".

Whether you're a rosarian or a dabbler, you won't be able to go past this book.

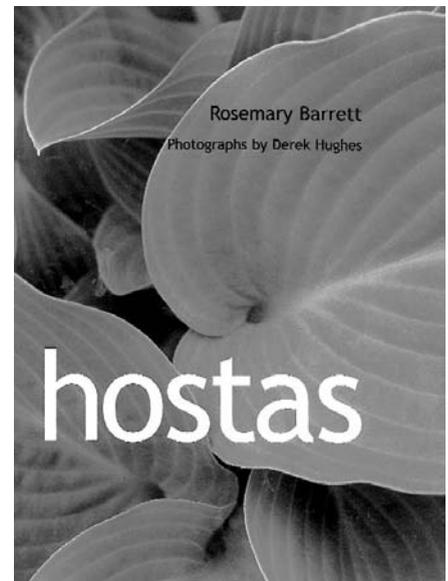
*Weekend Gardener, Issue 141, 2004, Page 26*

### Hostas

Rosemary Barrett

Photographs by Derek Hughes

David Bateman Ltd. NZ\$39.99



LIKE many plants, hostas can prompt a love/hate relationship: they're magnificent when a comfortable habitat allows them to flourish in splendid diversity, but cranky and tatty if plonked into hostile conditions and left for slug fodder.

This timely New Zealand book by nurserywoman and writer Rosemary Barrett is unequivocal in promoting hostas as the perfect perennial. As she points out, they are plants that are easily grown and valued for their range of foliage.

Well structured, superbly illustrated and cleanly laid out, the book details the discovery and development of various species. Two early spreads focus on foliage and hosta flowers. The foliage spread has a portfolio of 11 pictures across two pages, a compelling way to present the diversity of the genus.

The book also details when and where to plant hostas, their shade needs and soil preferences.

Propagation is discussed in detail,

including a useful section on growing from seed.

Various aspects of landscaping with hostas are given three chapters and there are useful sections on container growing and companion planting. Their seasonal demise even gets the once-over.

Enthusiasts will relish the 20-page hosta catalogue at the back, although search as we might, we couldn't find the "useful addresses" referred to in the index.

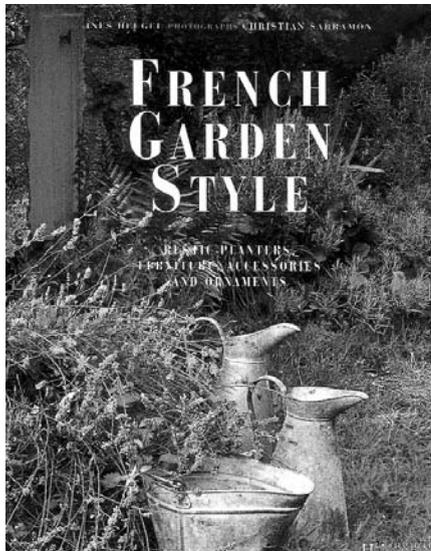
It's great to have a book written for New Zealand gardeners, championing the cause of a plant that deserves wider recognition.

One peculiarity: despite being written by a New Zealander, the book has been sold to an American distributor and thus features American spelling.

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### French Garden Style

Ines Hèugel, Photographs by Christian Sarramon  
Hachette, Bookwise International  
NZ\$59.95



FORGET plants – *French Garden Style* is concerned with almost everything in the garden but. The focus here is garden collectibles and the ambience they bring to French gardens. For those hooked on garden embellishment – planters, furniture, ornaments and so on – this book is a must-read.

You might have to ignore that these collectibles are half a world away; thorough local foraging may turn

up ring-ins for Medici vases and suchlike.

*French Garden Style* is clearly divided into four sections: Containers and supports; Garden furniture; Accessories; and Ornamental features. Aptly chosen photos, bolstered by relevant artwork or pictures from period catalogues, illustrate each section.

The book details the origin of various styles of collectibles. You'll find all you need to know about Aubagne and Impruneta pottery, wire containers and wickerwork, even down to oddities like Lloyd Loom (an extraordinary faux rattan used in woven chairs).

If garden gnomes and scarecrows are your thing, there's a nod in their direction too. There's also a passing glance at antique garden tools, carts, barrows, and watering cans. Most chapters carry useful tips or hints on what to look out for in various collectibles and, importantly, how to restore, care for and, in some cases, age them.

Determined Kiwi scavengers (those for whom distance is no object), will find websites listed in the back that offer a starting point. Buyers beware: chasing that authentic *je ne sais quoi* may be addictive and call for – price of the book aside – a plump wallet.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 142, 2004, Page 28*

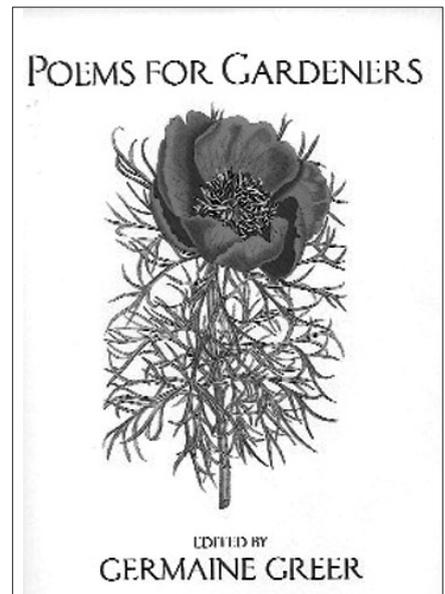
### Poems for Gardeners

Germaine Greer  
Virago Press, Penguin. NZ\$35

GERMAINE Greer, pioneer feminist, academic and passionate gardener, digs deep into verse's treasure trove to come up with this thought-provoking, entertaining anthology. Greer says her aim was to "assemble a group of poems that would mean more to gardeners than they would to people who don't garden".

This wide-ranging collection is culled from 79 poets and split into seven categories: The Garden; The Gardener; The Seasons and so on.

Represented are classical, mediaeval, metaphysical and romantic poets. Emily Dickinson



(dubbed by Greer as, "perhaps the greatest of garden poets") and the recently movie-venerated Sylvia Plath are here; so, too, is our own – or nearly our own – Fleur Adcock. Adcock's *An Emblem*, a playful tribute to mating slugs, is among our favourites.

Greer's footnotes on each poet provide fascinating botanical and biographical insights. The index, listing both the poets and the first lines, makes it easy to find your way around.

The scarlet hard cover, embossed with a peony, and the ribbon bookmark add a bonus touch. Put this one on the gift-list for a special gardening friend.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 142, 2004, Page 28*

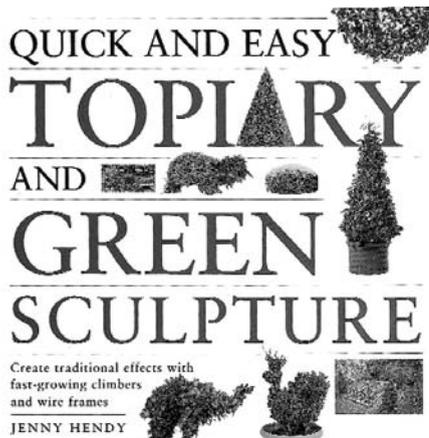
### Quick and Easy Topiary and Green Sculpture

Jenny Hendy  
Penguin. NZ\$55

To the novice, topiary seems pretty scary stuff – far easier to deliver a shocking short-back-and-sides to your precious shrub rather than an immaculate coiffure. But here some of the mystique is unravelled.

This paperback version of a four-year-old hardback promises some projects that can be accomplished in under an hour.

*Quick and Easy Topiary* kicks off with a guide to making topiary frames and, before you can say "ivy", it has you training plants over them.



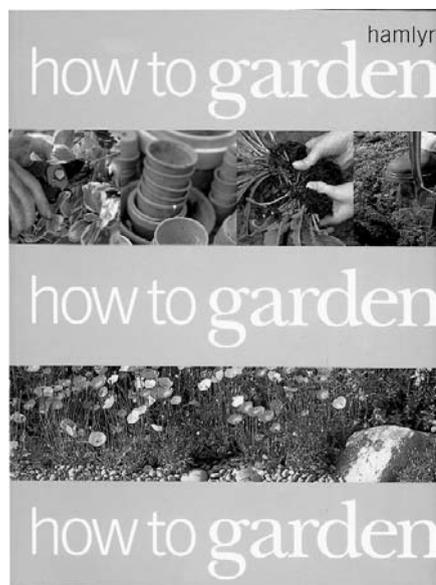
Chapters on traditional topiary and how to adapt this to modern gardens follow. The book gives step-by-step tips on topiary care and a directory of shapes – birds, Christmas trees and teddy bears among them – to try your hand at. Quick-growing alternatives to the traditional box and yew are given – a 32-page listing outlines more than 60 suitable topiary plants to use, their characteristics, cultivation and pointers on training them. There's plenty of detail backed by clear illustrations in this largish-format, "how-to" book.

If you've ever wanted to try your hand at the art and the price is no deterrent, *Quick and Easy Topiary* is a useful primer.

*Weekend Gardener*, Issue 142, 2004, Page 28

### How to Garden

Hamlyn (distributed by Bookwise International). NZ\$51.95



"NOT another how-to-garden book," we hear you cry. Our sentiments, too, but then, after

digging deeper, we relented. If the how-to genre was marked on clarity and persuasive layout, as well as breadth of information, *How to Garden* would come near top of the class.

It starts with - no prize for guessing - The Basics: What is a plant? Describing plants, choosing tools, and so on. The subject matter in the following 10 chapters is comprehensive, ranging from soil types to a season-by-season look at the garden.

Each chapter carries detailed "how-to" sidebars, which help to make the book a winner for the novice. Some take a "best of" or "top 10" line: best ferns, top-10 shrubs, and so on. It may be gardening by numbers, but many of the tips will help to avert the setbacks that discourage the new gardener.

The illustrations speak for themselves – there's no better way to compare a root-bound potted plant to one with a healthy root structure than to actually see the difference.

There's a "jargon-busting" glossary at the back, as well as an FAQ-style, trouble-shooting guide. Apart from the telltale question about moles, this British publication has a lot of mileage for the would-be Kiwi gardener. If you know someone who's about to plunge into gardening or if you need a back-to-basics refresher yourself, you won't do much better.

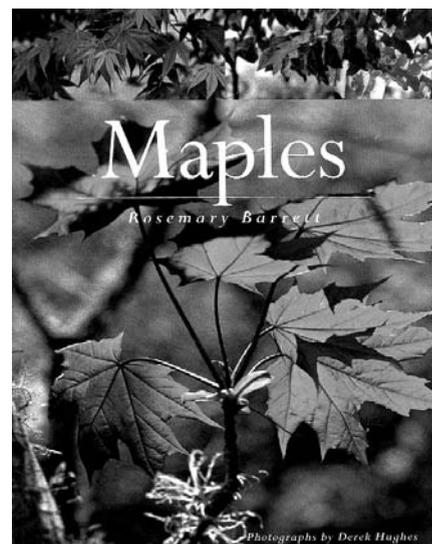
*Weekend Gardener*, Issue 144, 2004, Page 28

### Maples

Rosemary Barrett  
Photographs by Derek Hughes  
David Bateman. NZ\$29.95

WITH leaves turning colour at this time of year, *Maples* is a timely addition to the bookshelf. Few trees surpass maples' autumn display and Kiwi author/plantswoman Rosemary Barrett knows her stuff when it comes to these eye-catching trees – she has more than 80 species and varieties in her own garden.

In her book she describes more than 130 species and cultivars, many depicted in the 115



photographs through Derek Hughes' keen lens.

After dealing with the basics of cultivation, Rosemary Barrett enthusiastically tackles her favourites, Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*). In an epilogue containing her top 20, the "red maple" cultivars 'Beni-komachi' and 'Beni-maiko' head the list. She also takes a look at North American maples. *Acer saccharum*, the sugar maple (from which maple syrup comes) is billed as among that continent's finest deciduous trees. Rosemary Barrett is refreshingly authoritative. When discussing group planting for a large garden she plumps for 15 trees "mixed for colour and variety", opting first for *Acer palmatum* 'Shindeshojo' "because of its wonderful variation in colour".

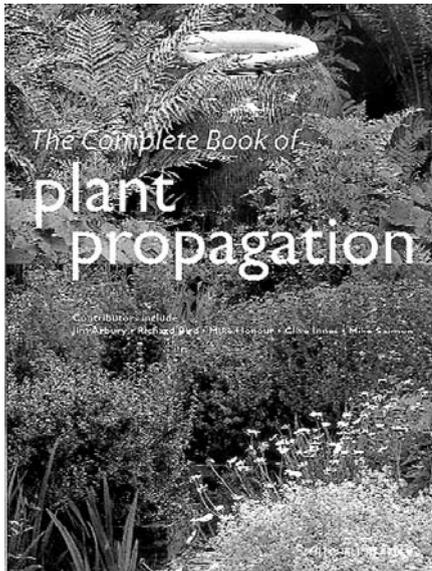
A chapter on companion planting follows discussion on landscaping with maples. Among her favoured companion trees is the dogwood (cornus). Rosemary Barrett's top choices of companion shrubs include rhodos and japonica. Concise tables detail the suitable complementary plants, which include bulbs and perennials. They also give the hardiness zones and habit of the companions. A chapter on landscaping with container-grown maples will appeal to space-starved city gardeners.

So, if you're in tree-planting mode over the winter and considering a maple or two, *Maples* will give you all the signposts you need.

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## The Complete Book of Plant Propagation

Various contributors including Jim Arbury, Richard Bird, Mike Honour, Clive Innes, Mike Salmon  
Published by Mitchell Beazley.  
NZ\$49.95



WHETHER you're green-fingered or a hit-and-miss merchant, you're bound to get something out of this book. Regardless of plant material, the book points out that the foundation for successful propagation is simply good hygiene and the right conditions for rooting and growth. Where one method fails, another will succeed.

Thirteen British experts have contributed. The book's success is borne out by the fact this is the third imprint in seven years and its "propagation-for-dummies" approach seems the drawcard. Chapters explain why and when you should propagate herbaceous perennials, ferns, shrubs, trees and climbers and so on – then discuss suitable techniques.

Another strength is the clear illustrations and their practical, concise captions. There's a succinct explanation on hybridising, directories on what to propagate season by season and on pests and diseases.

A useful primer on propagation that fills a gap in the gardener's library.  
*Weekend Gardener, Issue 145, 2004, Page 28*

## Conservatory & Houseplants

Editor: Robin Pridy  
Distributed by Penguin. NZ\$22.95



This A-Z will be a welcome addition to the shelves of those who enjoy the challenge of bringing their gardens indoors.

This useful pocketbook lists about 300 plants, illustrating them with bold, clear photographs. Each listing has a plant profile with details of its habit, preferred site and soil type, hardiness and flowering times. The susceptibility of each plant to pests is also discussed.

*Conservatory and Houseplants* lays out basic environmental and other conditions essential for nurturing indoor plants: their likes and dislikes; ventilation and humidity; when to repot; as well as composting and pruning.

The handy quick-reference layout, with the pages' alphabetical colour key clearly marked, make this a winner.

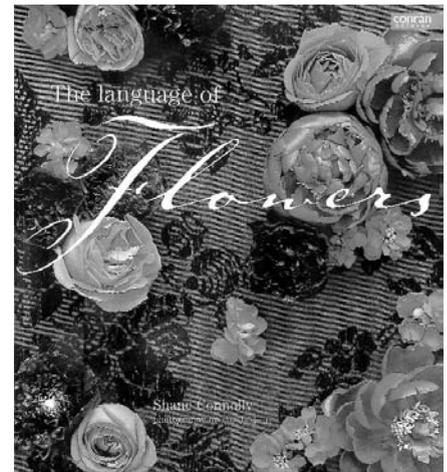
As with *Urban Eden*, this book will find favour with those whose garden horizons have become restricted.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 146, 2004, Page 28*

## The Language of Flowers

Shane Connolly  
Photography by Jan Baldwin  
Distributed by Reed Books.  
NZ\$59.95

Flowers have, over the centuries, acquired symbolic meanings. At various times this unspoken code has carried more weight than words. Whereas the spoken language of



emotion is often ambivalent, the clear message carried by flowers can be unequivocal.

*The Language of Flowers* uncovers, pictorially and textually, the flower's rich history and presents it anew.

Florist Shane Connolly matches flower with emotions, giving the relevant history of what varieties have meant over the ages.

There are intriguing tidbits. Did you know, for instance, that the name foxglove came from a Norse legend that had foxes wearing the flowers on their paws? Or that the Aztecs flavoured chocolate with the tuberose?

Perhaps the real strength of the book is in its evocative photographs and the excellent flower arranging tips.

A great present for a close gardening friend.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 146, 2004, Page 28*

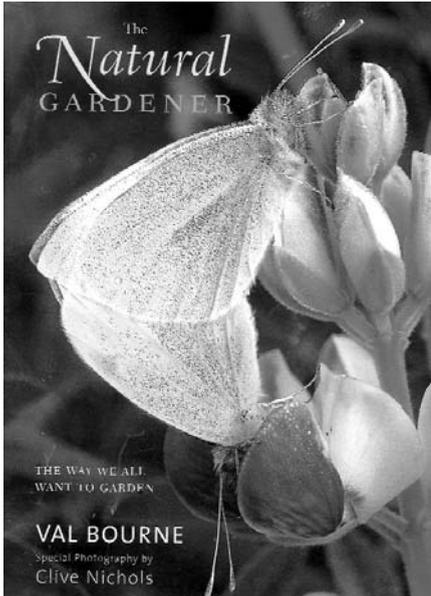
## The Natural Gardener The Way We All Want to Garden

Val Bourne  
Distributed by Bookwise International  
NZ\$49.95

English garden writer Val Bourne makes it quite clear which side of the fence she's on – gardening for her is part of a larger picture, making a friendly habitat for wildlife.

Her conversion to natural gardening came in tandem with her understanding of the complexity of her garden's eco-system.

This personal account stems from Bourne's 15 years' gardening in a dryish corner of the Cotswolds. For Bourne, gardening is to "go with



what you've got, exploit each area and overcome difficulties creatively – choosing your plants accordingly". There's a fascinating wealth of material in this season-by-season account relayed with a quiet passion. Snippets such as the portraits of the bumblebee, honeybee and hedgehog and her tips on companion planting leaven the book.

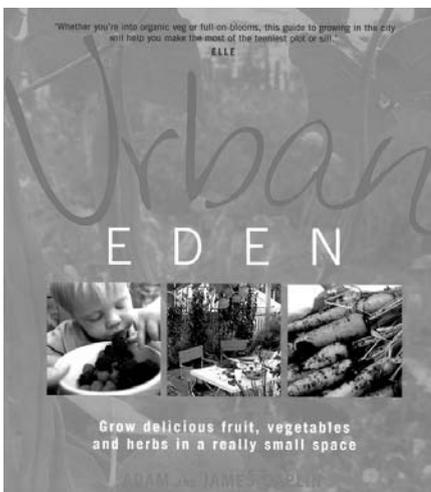
This book blends the practical with the romance of gardening – a fireside tonic for winter days.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 146, 2004, Page 28*

### Urban Eden

#### Grow delicious fruit, vegetables and herbs in a really small space

Adam and James Caplin  
Distributed by Reed Publishing Ltd.  
NZ\$39.99



AUTHOR James Caplin, so the introduction says, lives a normal, stressed urban existence with too

much to do and too little time to do it. He's not a gardening professional, but a family man whose 6m x 6m plot provides something for the table almost every day. This, then, is the nub of *Urban Eden* – how to grow fruit, vegetables and herbs successfully in really small spaces.

Caplin reassures those who assume that pollutants make city vegetable gardening a no-no. Lead from exhaust is generally not an issue, he concludes, and if there's still a worry about contaminants, containers and raised beds will do the trick. There are lots of tips on containers, the mainstay of small space gardening, in keeping with the book's eco-friendly style.

There are few limits on what the urban gardener can grow – fruit trees in containers, tomatoes in hanging baskets, kale, sage or borage in a border – there are plenty of suggestions here.

Confined space can mean your neighbour's eyesore is yours, too. The chapter on design deals with aesthetic bugbears. There's a chapter on urban wildlife – cats, like slugs and snails, know too few boundaries.

In case you need reminding of what to do with your urban garden's bounty, there are some great recipes to round off with and a useful appendix on good plants to cultivate, and how to grow them.

An informative, lively book for those who have had to down size their gardens or for those starting out on an urban gardening adventure.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 146, 2004, Page 28*

### Creative Vegetable Gardening

Joy Larkcom  
Published by Mitchell Beazley  
Distributed by Reed  
NZ\$49.95

MOST vegetable gardens are considered to be merely functional – their form inconsequential as long as they deliver the goods.

Well-known English gardening writer Joy Larkcom takes a different view. In this revised edition she appeals to "vegetable lovers who want the best of both worlds: a vegetable



garden that is beautiful and productive".

What we're talking about here is the potager, a term Larkcom has 'stolen' to apply to any vegetable garden that "has been touched with the paintbrush of the imagination".

With its appropriately large format, *Creative Vegetable Gardening* describes the various techniques of forming and cultivating the four types of potager: formal, informal, small urban and winter. The vegetables and flowers you can combine for maximum dramatic effect are detailed and well illustrated. A further chapter looks at how fruit trees can be used to show off and complement the vegetables and herbs in the kitchen garden.

The comprehensive section on potager management will appeal to any vegetable gardener – it includes a useful chart showing what to plant when, to achieve a continuous harvest of vegetables.

A comprehensive A-Z directory of suitable varieties will have Kiwi gardeners scouring seed catalogues in the name of style and taste.

This easy-to-read, comprehensive book contains a wealth of inspiration for the vegetable gardener.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 147, 2004, Page 22*

### Book review archive

Our entire archive of book reviews (from the *Journal of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture* 1981, under its various names), together with book reviews from the *Weekend Gardener* magazine (from Issue 86, November 2001) are now available on our website at [www.rnzih.org.nz](http://www.rnzih.org.nz).