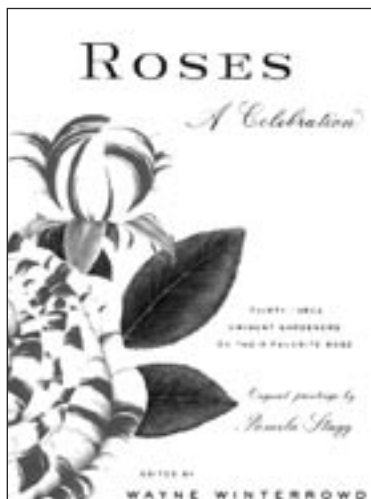


Book Reviews

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

Roses. A Celebration Thirty-three Eminent Gardeners on their Favorite Rose

Edited by Wayne Winterrowd
Original Paintings by Pamela Stagg
Frances Lincoln
Distributed by Bookwise
International. NZ\$49.95



SURELY nothing new can be written about the virtues and beauty of roses? Hasn't everything that could be said, in a literary sense been said? Well, sceptics, this hard-back will stifle those yawns.

American garden writer/editor Wayne Winterrowd's formula is disarmingly simple – just gather 32 eminent gardeners and ask them why roses are so loved; what roses have that other flowers lack. The result is, as Winterrowd points out, a book “made up of essays not so much about roses as about personal memories of them”.

Some writers, particularly the British contingent, will need no introduction – Graham Stuart Thomas, Christopher Lloyd, David Austin among them. The American voices may be less familiar. No matter: reminiscence and knowledge overlap to engage-and enchant the reader.

Favourite essays include New York Times gardening columnist Ann Raver on her lost rugosa, 'Roseaie de l'Hay', and novelist

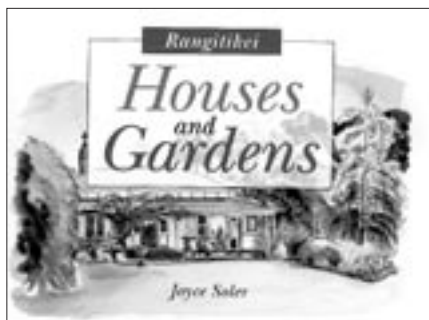
Jamaica Kincaid on her edgy relationship with 'Alchemist'. Christopher Lloyd's heresies raise a chuckle (“... *I like roses when they are at their brief best in your garden rather than mine*”). Massachusetts landscape designer Julie Moir Messervy's opening line is just as brazen: “I'll admit it – I never really liked roses very much.”

Fergus Garrett, head gardener at Lloyd's Great Dixter, and half Turkish, offers a delightful insight on the rose's place in the Turkish culture and a couple of recipes as well. Pamela Stagg's graceful watercolours are a striking foil for the text.

Roses – A Celebration is a must for rosarians and an intriguing read for the rest of us mere gardening mortals.

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Rangitikei Houses and Gardens Joyce Soler. NZ\$39.95



THE introduction to this enchanting book on Rangitikei's heritage sums up the tone and ambience of this book. Gardener extraordinaire Gordon Collier, whose Titoki Point garden features in the book, comments:

“This is not a conventional book about gardens – there are many of these. Joyce Soler has used her artistic talents to produce a particularly personal view of the houses and gardens of the Rangitikei, a beautiful part of New Zealand she knows so well.”

Joyce Soler has exhibited widely in Manawatu-Wanganui

regions and works in both oils and watercolours. In this self-published book she captures some 20 houses and gardens in the region. Among these gems are the Colonial House at Bulls, the little Kendrick Cottage at Marton, Woodleigh Farm and, of course, Titoki Point. The author's detailed text includes accounts of the aspect of the gardens and species they contain. Her paintings, done with a keen eye for detail, evoke the character of the dwellings and their surroundings.

This is a grand guide for any garden lover contemplating touring the region and a delightful memento for those who already know it. Some of the houses and gardens are historically significant and the book will prove a pertinent record for future generations.

**Rangitikei Houses and Gardens* can be ordered from the author, Joyce Soler, 2RD Marton.

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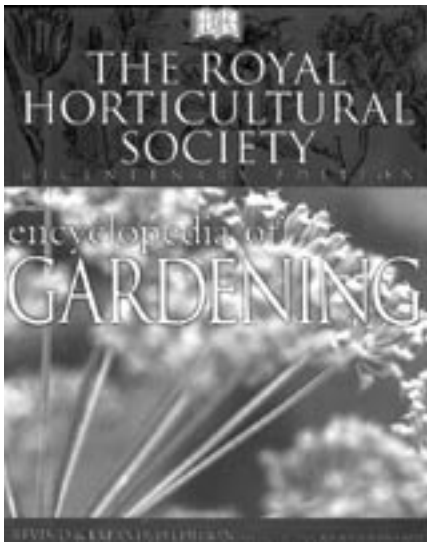
RHS Encyclopedia of Gardening

Edited by Christopher Brickell
Dorling Kindersley
Distributed by Penguin. NZ\$99.95

PEDIGREES don't come much stronger than the Royal Horticultural Society and the bicentenary edition of this classic is everything a gardener could want and possibly more – in the best possible way, that is. For this is no dusty tome to haul out as an occasional reference, but a giant “how-to” handbook which will be of great practical use.

Editor-in-chief Christopher Brickell was with the RHS for almost 40 years, retiring from the position of director general in 1993. He had a similar hand in the impressive companion volume, the *RHS Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers* and is widely published as a horticulturist in his own right.

The work is split into two parts: *Creating the Garden* and *Maintaining the Garden*. The



aim of the first part is to cover all aspects of planning, plant cultivation and care. It opens with a comprehensive section on planning and design, crammed with ideas on achieving an ideal garden to suit a range of lifestyles. If, rather than starting from scratch, you want to make over an existing garden, there are some great tips on incorporating existing features in your project. The individual chapters in this section focus on the main plant groups and areas of the garden, ranging from ornamental trees and perennials. Each chapter has in-depth, illustrated instructions.

The second section is equally as comprehensive and focuses on garden equipment, landscaping and so on.

There's also useful coverage of issues like water conservation and organics. The illustrations in the section on pest and diseases are a bonus and an aid for quick identification and control.

The Royal Horticultural Society was founded in 1894 with the aim of "the improvement of the practice of horticulture". The RHS has lost none of its vigour and insight, judging by this work. The keen gardener won't be able to go past it.

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Chelsea, the Greatest Flower Show on Earth

Leslie Geddes-Brown
Dorling-Kindersley
Distributed by Penguin. NZ\$49.95

CHELSEA is simply gardening's biggest bunfight. Hundreds of thousands attend the Royal



Horticultural Society's flagship event annually. This year's show marked the RHS's bicentenary and the book commemorates this, as well as serving as a souvenir of Chelsea's history since 1913.

With its array of historic pictures, and garden writer Leslie Geddes-Brown's keen ear for anecdote, the book brings the show's fascinating past alive.

There are six sections: Brave Beginnings; Chelsea Now; Behind the Scenes; Glorious Gardens; The Showmen; The Social Side.

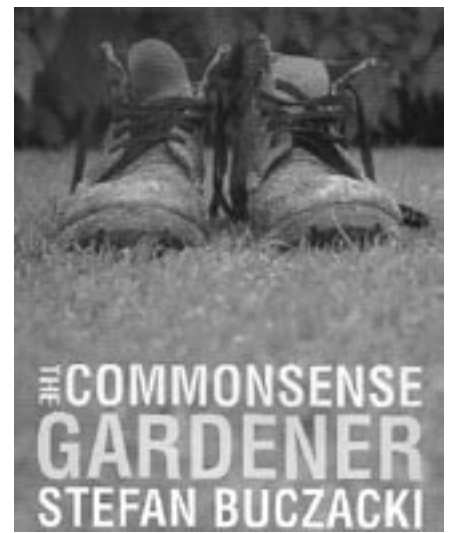
Among other things, we learn that: exhibitors collectively spend as much as \$60 million each year; that the Queen Mother once refused to speak to a famous rose grower because he wasn't wearing a tie; that in the first show there were no fewer than 17 rock or formal gardens; that preparations for each annual event begin 18 months in advance; and that, in 1994, so risqué was one exhibit that the censors moved in to confiscate various bits and pieces.

And among the in-fighting, the back-biting and the who's been by whom and with what, you'll find a spot of serious horticulture. If you've visited Chelsea and want your memories quickened, this is the book for you. If you've never been but want to learn what the brouhaha is all about, buy it.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 151, 2004, Page 29

The Commonsense Gardener
Stefan Buczacki. Frances Lincoln
Distributed by Bookwise.
NZ\$58.99

IF you're British and a gardener, it would be hard to miss the name



Stefan Buczacki. By the author's website estimate he's made 2000 radio and television appearances and written countless articles and more than 50 books. He's an academic as well as a populist, so well known in mycology that his name crops up in British exam papers.

His latest effort, *The Commonsense Gardener*, is an authoritative ramble revealing an approach to gardening formulated by the author's own experiences and his contact with thousands of British gardeners through three decades.

When subjects like organics and crop rotation are discussed, you know this is no second-hand account – Buczacki pins his viewpoint to practical experience backed up by a wealth of knowledge.

In this vein he tackles basics such as soil, fertilisers, pesticides and pruning. There's detailed discussion of his commonsense approach to tree and shrub gardening, kitchen and water gardening, gardening and ornamentals and wildlife gardening, ending with a chapter on design.

The pages of this hardback are visually uncluttered and its style is more like a conversation over the back fence. This easy way has a lot to be said for it, as readers may find the information sticks readily. Buczacki is sought after as a consultant in his own country – this book may be the next best thing for the Kiwi gardener.

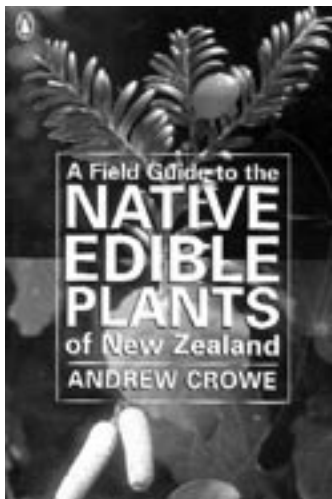
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A Field Guide to the Native Edible Plants of New Zealand

Andrew Crowe

Published by Penguin.

NZ\$29.95 (2004 edition)



THIS is not really a gardening book and certainly not haute cuisine. However, *Native Edible Plants of New Zealand*, with its mine of information about our heritage, will captivate readers.

There's no doubt that Andrew Crowe, an award-winning author of more than 30 natural history titles, is well qualified. The story of how he was inspired to write the book is almost as intriguing as the revelations about his 190 chosen plants. Suffice to say, it involved some hungry, testing times in the wild and, at the very least, a couple of knowledgeable mentors.

Each entry, most accompanied by a line-drawing, details the plant's description, where it can be found, the part eaten, when it's available, its use and other related plants. You'll find trees, shrubs, ferns, fungi, lichen and seaweed – most, if not taste-tempting, at least ... well, edible.

Some plants are rare and endangered and, if you want to eat something, be sure you know what it is and what its qualities are to avoid poisoning yourself.

Crowe defines his work as a practical guide about what can be eaten as well as a comprehensive study of early Māori plant foods. It has the hallmark of a useful pocketbook for anyone "going bush". To anyone with a love of the outdoors, it's sure to be an interesting read and – who knows? – a possible life-saver.

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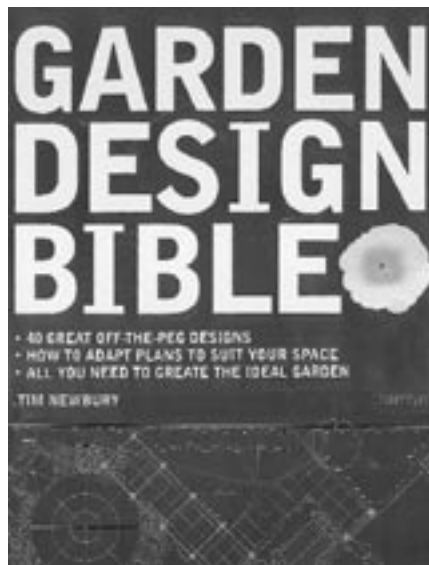
Garden Design Bible

Tim Newbury

Hamlyn

Distributed by Bookwise.

NZ\$51.95



DO you dream of transforming your back garden into a romantic retreat? Would you like to make a modern-day Utopia on your balcony? Is your ideal outdoor space a minimalist design with easy-to-care-for plants or a family garden with room to grow culinary herbs?" That's exactly what this colourful book has been designed to help you achieve.

Garden Design Bible is written by four-times Chelsea gold medal-winner Tim Newbury and the ease at which it can be read is an indication of the man's ability to make garden design achievable for all and sundry.

Whether yours is a small courtyard, a veritable jungle or a sweeping lawn, Newbury's designs can be incorporated in most spaces. Indeed, he includes a section on how to adapt a plan to suit your own situation.

Forty designs are illustrated with photographs and drawings and each one includes a comprehensive list of plants and a clear planting diagram. In many designs, Newbury also features a weekend project for the DIY enthusiast. The broad range of step-by-step projects include how to build a natural-looking pond, a wooden herb bed, a trellis and bamboo screen and a wooden pergola.

Garden Design Bible is ideal for gardeners searching for new inspiration and clever design. It certainly outranks many books of a similar nature in that it provides clear instruction and lovely, original photographs.

As good design is the key to a successful garden, it's surprising there aren't more books of such high standard on how to design a garden. If you were to purchase such a book, this is the one to get.

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Gardeners' Advice

All Your Questions Answered RHS Wisley Experts

Dorling Kindersley

Distributed by Bookwise.

NZ\$55.00



As the introduction tells us, the Royal Horticultural Society's advisory service – a 13-strong team of scientists and horticultural advisers – answers more than 46,000 queries from its members each year.

The subjects range from pest control to plant identification and how to find a reliable contractor. This book, one of several published to mark the society's bicentenary, brings together advice that is scattered throughout other publications or simply not available elsewhere.

Twelve chapters are crammed with tips on 300 topics, most of it relevant to Kiwi gardeners. Although you may not want to know about bullfinch damage or how to control voles, you'll be more interested in eradicating

oxalis or how to prune wisterias. There's even an entry on how to grow kiwifruit.

The chapters are simple categories. They start with general advice, move through subjects like trees and shrubs, and perennials and on to water gardens.

The book's clear layout – page numbers are highlighted in reverse type on the margin with the topic printed underneath – makes information readily accessible. This is an ideal working manual for the gardener who wants a quick reference for practical advice, planting ideas, techniques and plant problems. If the RHS boffins haven't heard of it, you can bet your best garden boots it doesn't exist.

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New Shoots, Old Tips As Heard on BBC Radio 4

Caroline Holmes. Frances Lincoln
Distributed by Bookwise.
NZ\$44.95



New Shoots, Old Tips started out as a couple of radio series for the BBC broadcast in 2001 and 2002. Now designer/author Caroline Holmes has plucked her gems on the timeless quality of gardening back from the airwaves and put them into print.

The modest book is a thoroughly researched ramble through garden history and lore laced with the author's wry humour. However, the array of gardening

"sources" threatens to become a little overwhelming, among others: Thomas Jefferson, Virgil, Sam Beeton, John Claudius Loudon (publisher of the 1822 Encyclopaedia of Gardening and founder of *Gardener's Magazine*, Thomas Rivers (19th Century fruit breeder extraordinaire), the plant hunter Robert Fortune (who introduced the Chinese gooseberry to New Zealand) and even Peter Rabbit and Popeye.

We learn snippets to drop into conversation: the word salad stems from the Italian zelada, "a dish devised to the festivities in 15th Century Milan, consisting of a salty ragout..." and that "basil thrives on dead men's entrails".

The illustrations, many culled from long ago garden treatises and catalogues, will intrigue the garden historian. These and the choice of photos lift the book (among favourites is a stern group of Edwardian garden staff and a small girl pushing a barrow, circa 1920). A fascinating read if you're right into garden history: others may find it heavier going.

*Weekend Gardener, Issue 153, 2004, Page 29
(also in Issue 155)*

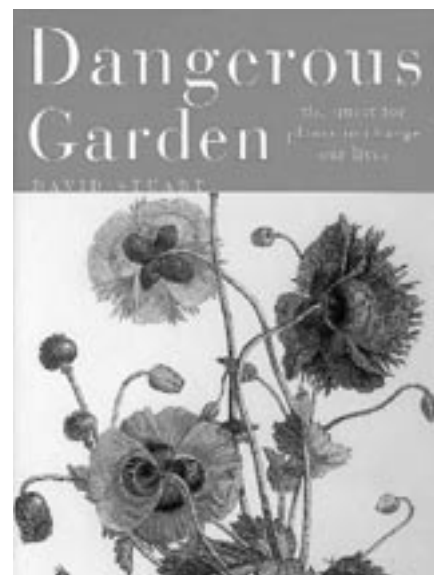
Dangerous Garden The quest for plants to change our lives

David Stuart. Frances Lincoln
Distributed by Bookwise.
NZ\$74.95

WE gardeners tend to view our plants as friends – so the odd prickly or irritating encounter doesn't faze us. Our benevolence is such that it's easy to believe that if something's natural, it's got to be good for you.

Armed with history and with science at his elbow, David Stuart scratches away at cosy notions such as these. Many plants, he reveals, have a "Janus nature" – they both "kill" and "cure". And often, despite our absolute conviction otherwise, some do neither.

So Stuart pores over plague and leprosy, pain and ecstasy, childbirth and death, malaria and Aids, fertility and heart disease, exploration and religion, shedding light on our edgy relationship with the plant world.



Exploitation success and failure litter this relationship: rhubarb, mallow and the poison-nut tree did nothing for the 17th Century plague victim; willow trees, under the transforming magic of 19th Century German chemist Felix Hoffman, gave us aspirin and trouble-free pain relief; the scientific jury is out on the benefit of ginseng, but such is the demand for this plant that it's a rarity in the wild.

Stuart serves up quackery and delusion, poisonings and panaceas along with a range of plants found in our back yards: opium poppy, wolfsbane, Queen Anne's lace and foxglove.

This splendidly illustrated hardback prompts new respect for your garden. You may also see herbal remedies in a very different light.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 155, 2004, Page 29

Container Gardening

Paul Williams
Norling Kindersley
Distributed by Penguin. NZ\$65.00

THERE'S certainly no shortage of words on container gardening. Container books are a growth industry, spurred by the shrinking of garden space and the vogue for outdoor living.

Englishman Paul Williams, head gardener at a large garden in the Cotswolds, brings a touch of authenticity to the genre; the container plants lavishly illustrated here were grown and tended



by the author himself and he's refreshingly candid about his likes, dislikes and even failures.

While container design and grouping are given more than a passing nod, the emphasis of this book is on the gardening aspect. Williams is billed as a passionate plantsman and his enthusiasm and his eye for plant combinations, his mixing and matching of texture and colour, are inspirational. In the second chapter Williams has put together 44 container portraits, each with a theme, testimony to his knowledge and skill.

There's sound advice on plant care; the tips on planting, maintenance, repotting and so on are well laid out with clear step-by-step illustrations. An illustrated A-Z of easy-to-grow container plants contains more than 300 species. The book isn't cheap but if you're starting out or rekindling an interest in container gardening it's all the words you need.

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Inspiration from the Ellerslie Flower Show

Neil Ross and Gil Hanly
New Holland NZ. NZ\$39.95

ELLERSLIE Flower Show is, of course, not just any old flower show – it is a tribute to New Zealand's gardeners, showcasing the richness and diversity that makes gardening this country's No. 1 pastime.

Well-known gardening writer Neil Ross and Gil Hanly, the doyenne of New Zealand's garden photographers, have put



together a beautiful and timely book encapsulating the spirit of the annual show over its 10-year history.

As Maggie Barry reminds us in her introduction, about 70,000 visitors annually make the pilgrimage to Auckland's Regional Botanic Gardens in Manurewa "for the pleasure and privilege of seeing the best Kiwi gardening has to offer".

In his introduction, Neil Ross backgrounds the beginnings of the show and then traces its evolution, reminding the reader that in a fragmented industry Ellerslie has formed "a valuable nucleus".

Rather than a show-by-show history, Ross has chosen a variety of themes – Harking Back, Essentially Kiwi, Dreamscapes and Playing it Straight among them – to capture the show's essence and fire the reader's imagination.

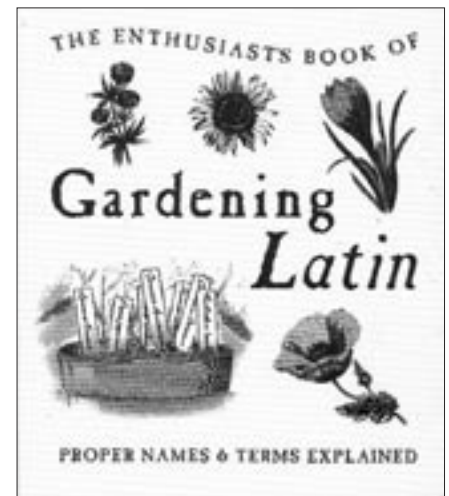
His easy style breathes life into past shows and exhibits. Gil Hanly's compelling photography reacquaints show-goers with many of their favourite exhibits – the various wildflower exhibits, last year's 'Kubla Khan', the technicoloured boots and shoes crammed with succulents, to name just three. A useful appendix lists the details of the designers whose work appears in the book.

As the title suggests, the book is not just a souvenir. It's a mirror in which Kiwi gardeners can see their gardens (or the gardens they dream of having) reflected.

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The Enthusiasts Book of Gardening Latin Proper Names & Terms Explained

Michael Streeter. Last Times
Distributed by Bookwise.
NZ\$15.95



THOSE who sweated over Latin at school have the jump on the rest of us when it comes to trying to remember botanical names. This is a helpful little catch-up book.

The introduction is a concise explanation of plant classification and how Latin came to be used to describe plants. The meaning of many Latin terms – for colour and markings, habitat, shape and size and so on – are explained. The book concludes with a glossary of plants and an explanation of the Latin in their names.

If nothing else, *Gardening Latin* could help mount a counter attack against a tedious botanical name-dropper. Dubbing their highly prized plant "*tragophyllus*" (leaves with a goat-like smell) might just stifle them.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 158, 2004, Page 2

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.