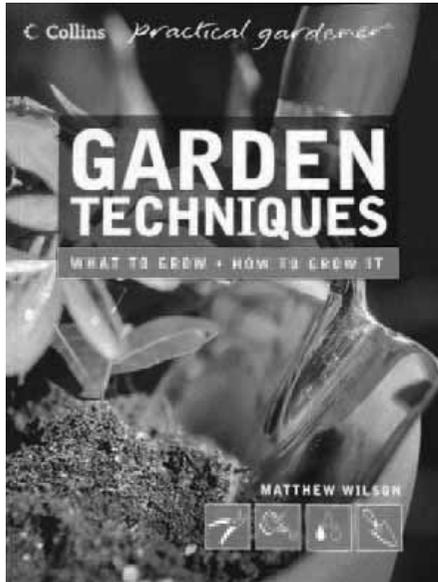


A selection of the best book reviews of 2006, compliments of the *Weekend Gardener*. Part 2.

Garden Techniques

Matthew Wilson



Plants for Shade

Philip Clayton

Wild Gardens

Jenny Hendy

Harper Collins

\$NZ19.99 each

Reviewed by Rob Gordon

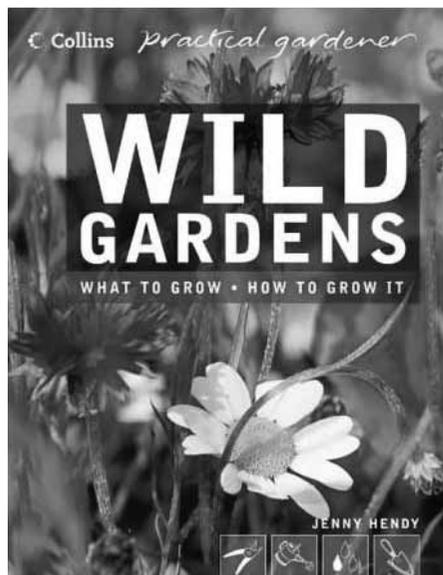
THE three titles are among a bevy of six books Harper Collins has introduced into its already popular, inexpensive *Practical Gardener* series (the other titles not reviewed are *Lawns, Bamboos and Grasses*, and *Conservatory and Greenhouse Gardening*).

Garden Techniques is a sound introduction to the basics, with information on soil preparation, plant types and growth through to tools, propagation, pruning and pests. It is written with today's gardener in mind, one who is less inclined to use chemicals and more likely to want to encourage wildlife into the garden. As with the other manuals in this series, it is clearly illustrated and laid out with lots of handy tips in boxes. Towards the back of the book there's an easy-to-follow troubleshooting chart. Here, it categorises plant pest and disease symptoms – a valuable aid to the novice and experienced gardener alike.



Many gardeners view shade as a liability rather than an asset. Furthermore, some of us with shady gardens try to ignore the fact, blithely putting in plants that relish sun and then wondering why they turn into stragglers and strugglers. These gardeners will find *Plants for Shade* a great help in helping to turn shady spots into flourishing features. It tackles such questions

as soil type and the amount of moisture present before offering suggestions on how to manage the shade you have. Tips are also given on planting combinations and choosing the right plants. The plant entries themselves have quick-reference tables on their care as well as a chart for comparing different varieties.



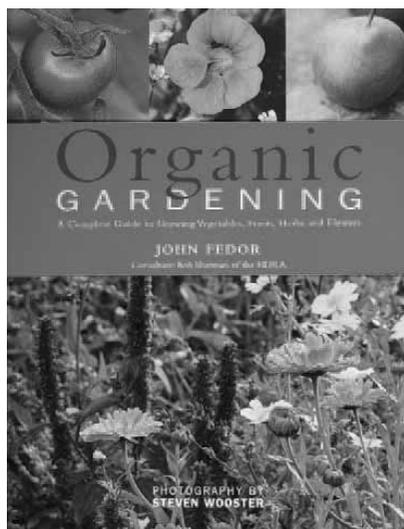
If you're wanting drifts of wildflowers, *Wild Gardens* will point you in the right direction. But there may be some cul-de-sacs in this British publication, too. Plants cherished in the less temperate climate can become thugs here. Indeed, pretty as they may be, plants like the fern *Dryopteris* and the lupins recommended here may be considered exotic weeds in New Zealand. Nonetheless, this is an interesting introduction that reflects the conservation trend around the world of nurturing in our gardens some of the plants that may well be threatened in the wild.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 199, 2006, Page 28

Organic Gardening for the 21st Century

A complete guide to growing vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers

John Fedor
Photography by Steven Wooster
Frances Lincoln
Distributed by Bookwise
International
\$NZ39.95
Reviewed by Mike Gowing



IN writing this book, John Fedor's credentials, as a biochemist who has turned his hand to organic gardening, are impeccable. The statement in the preface that organic gardening should never be thought of as backward looking is borne out in the text that follows. As befits a book emphasising that gardens can thrive without chemicals, much is made of getting the soil right through conditioning.

Fedor discusses compost and green manures, for example, at length. His biochemist's eye for detail turns in fascinating facts – as in, did you know that each tablespoon of topsoil has more than six million living organisms?

Crop rotation, saving seed, and heritage and heirloom varieties are all discussed. And Fedor is unequivocal about the use of sprays.

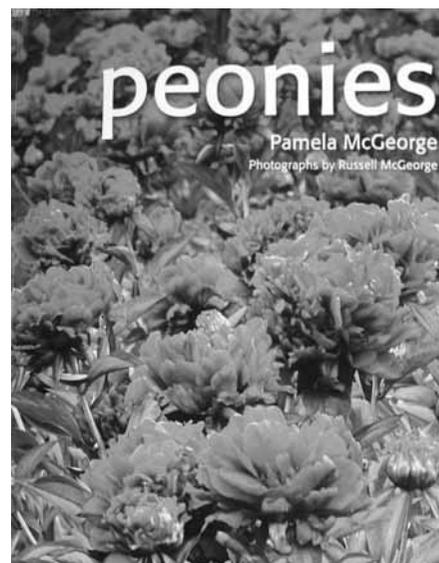
"A poison is a poison is a poison", he says, adding that organic pesticides and fungicides can be just as poisonous as their synthetic counterparts (Fedor lists his own occasional remedies, using among other things, garlic and chilli peppers).

This book is an ideal starting point for those who have the planet at heart when they pull their gardening gloves on.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 199, 2006, Page 28

Peonies

Pamela McGeorge
Photography by Russell McGeorge
David Bateman
\$NZ39.99
Reviewed by Mike Gowing



IF you're hooked on peonies but want to know more about this flamboyant flower, such as the best variety for your garden, then go no further than Pamela McGeorge's illuminating book. *Weekend Gardener* readers will already be familiar with Pamela's ready knowledge and lively style, as well as her photographer/husband Russell's discerning photography (more than 200 colour photographs are used). Here, their joint talents illuminate more than 180 species, covering the two main groups, herbaceous and tree peonies, as well as the crosses between these two – intersectional peonies.

For the more adventurous gardeners, there's a chapter on propagation dealing with division, growing from cuttings and collecting and growing from seed. Under the heading "Playing God", Pamela examines how to produce your own strain of plant.

The chapter on troubleshooting deals largely with the types of fungal problems peonies encounter (a clue to why they're petulant in our northern climes) as well as their predators.

The first of the two appendices lists selected varieties and their characteristics, while the second offers a comprehensive list of suppliers and contact details for British, Canadian and US organisations.

The history of the genus, including the use of *P. officinalis* in traditional Chinese medicine, is intriguing but of immediate interest is Pamela's clear vision of how to best integrate this hibernating perennial into your

planting scheme, including choosing cultivars that flower at different times.

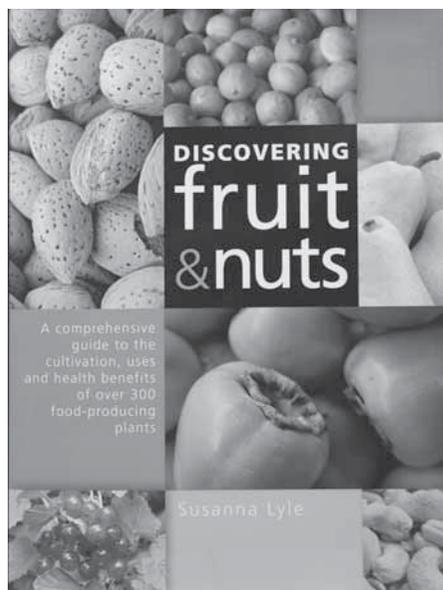
At a price that won't empty the purse, this book is bound to find favour.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 200, 2006, Page 35

Discovering Fruit & Nuts

A comprehensive guide to the cultivation, uses and health benefits of over 300 food-producing plants

Susanna Lyle
David Bateman
\$NZ89.99



Northland's Susanna Lyle has undertaken a huge task in putting together this painstaking, comprehensive A-Z guide of 220 species of fruits and nuts.

Dr Lyle's practical and academic experience of more than 25 years in plant and soil studies contributes to an authoritative book. The horticultural requirements of each plant is fully described along with their uses and information about their health benefits.

With more than 250 full-colour photographs, this book is inspiration for gardeners to grow and try new foods.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 205, 2006, Page 34

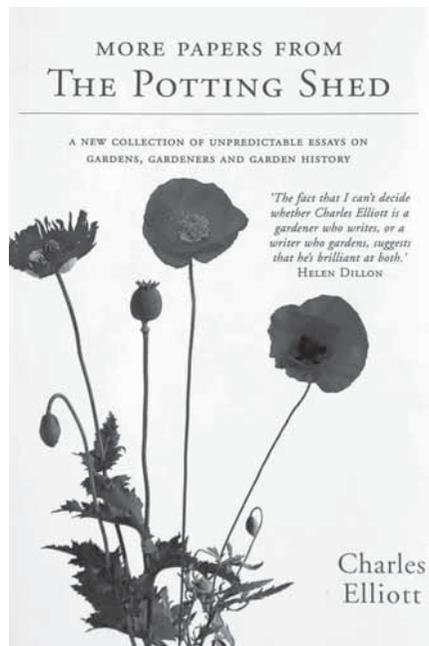
Book review archive

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.mzih.org.nz.

More Papers from the Potting Shed

A new collection of unpredictable essays on gardens, gardeners and garden history

Charles Elliott
Frances Lincoln
Distributed by Bookwise
\$NZ47.95



As renowned plantswoman Helen Dillon opines, the fact that it's hard to decide if Charles Elliott is a gardener who writes or a writer who gardens, suggests that he's brilliant at both.

Here is dry wit and wisdom on topics from growing potatoes to the contribution of the late, great landscaper Christopher Lloyd.

There's even a sidewise glance at the excesses of Chelsea Flower Show ("Is it gardening. Or is it gardening gone mad?").

An erudite, enjoyable potpourri.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 205, 2006, Page 34

RHS Propagating Plants

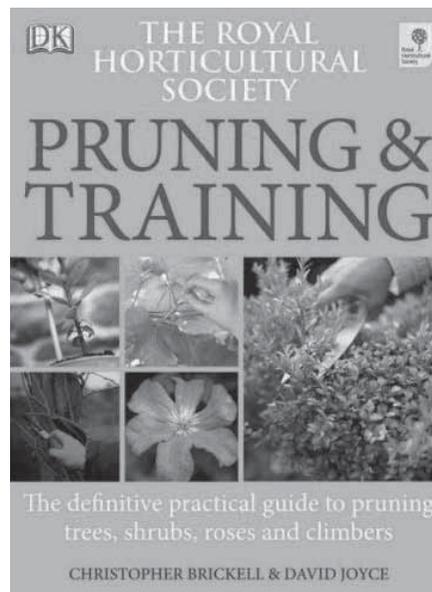
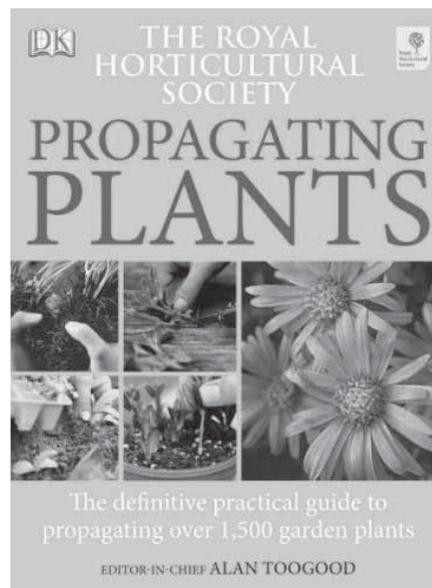
The definitive practical guide to propagating over 1,500 garden plants

Editor in Chief Alan Toogood

RHS Pruning & Training

The definitive practical guide to pruning trees, shrubs, roses and climbers

Christopher Brickell & David Joyce
Dorling Kindersley
Distributed by Penguin
\$NZ44.99 each



There's no doubt that these two books are "must-haves" for the serious gardener. They're exhaustive manuals – new paperback editions of twin titles published under the Royal Horticultural Society banner seven years ago.

Both are clearly set out, with introductory chapters giving all you need to know about the basics of both subjects. They share a practical A-Z approach; *Propagating Plants* has more than 1500 individual plant entries and unique tips from expert propagators.

In *Pruning and Training*, clear step-by-step illustrations show exactly where to make pruning cuts. The book details special techniques such as coppicing, topiary and pergola-training. Great companion volumes for Christmas.

Weekend Gardener, Issue 207, 2006, Page 46