

BOOKS

Wild Gardening: Strategies and Procedures Using Native Plantings, by Richard L. Austin. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986. \$12.95 (paper); \$19.85 (cloth).

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This is a beautiful book to look at, one filled with many spectacular images, most of which were taken by Derek Fell. In spite of its beauty, however, the book falls short of its potential to stimulate the reader to grow wild plants.

Wild Gardening begins with a very brief synopsis of gardening practices, starting with ancient Egypt and Greece, continuing through the Roman Empire, Medieval monastic gardens, Renaissance France, Eighteenth Century Persia, and into Twentieth Century municipal-park design. This whirlwind tour of some 3,500 years of gardening introduces the basic tenet of the book—that formal gardens were a natural outgrowth of humankind's domination of nature, but that a different, and very natural, ethic is evident today, an "alternative to formalism," a change the author ascribes in part to the energy crisis of the early 1970s.

Having set the stage, the author proceeds to discuss the various positive and negative aspects of wild gardening. On the positive side, the author suggests that such gardening requires less of the gardener's time, because less control is exerted over the manmade environment, and it requires less money to implement and maintain. According to the author, the drawbacks to gardening with wild plants are: problems associated with establishing the plants, difficulties in obtaining material, complaints by neighbors, possible

citations from community officials for growing "noxious weeds," and governmental regulations under the Endangered Species Act. This last point should be expanded upon: not only is the Endangered Species Act something to be concerned with (ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it), but there are many state laws protecting native plants that may or may not be on the Federal Government's list. Unfortunately, Austin neglects to mention state laws or to give the reader any idea of how to become informed of them.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into four chapters and an appendix. Unfortunately, the first chapter, "The Wild-Garden Systems," is weakened by what seems to be an attempt to use only easily understood words and concepts, to the point of creating oversimplified and nonstandard terminology. Thus, Austin partially defines and then continues to use such phrases as the "individual system" and the "population system," which appear to refer to nothing other than autecology and synecology. This makes for awkward wording when he writes about an "individual system" dying because of prolonged cold temperatures, or about "population systems" dying out because of a drying of the environment due to prolonged high temperatures. The drying out is said to "expand" competition!

Happily, the other chapters are more substantial and accurate. In the chapter entitled "Wild-Garden Themes," Austin stresses the importance of planning a theme for any garden, whether it be a traditional formal garden or a wild garden. Wild gardens are classified into three groups: woodland gardens, meadow gardens, and water gardens, and discussions of the natural ingredients

and the planting structure for each type follow. He then illustrates with a photograph and range map six forest zones of North America and eight grassland types. While a single photograph cannot do justice to any of these plant zones, the images are well chosen to convey the feeling one gets when visiting different parts of the country. In the unlikely event that a reader were trying to create a type of wild garden he had never seen in person, these photographs would provide him with a sense of the space and mood to strive for. This brings up a recurring complaint I have about the book—although the photographs are beautiful in the main, there is no indication of where they were taken, nor are many of the plants shown in them identified. It would be very useful to know exactly where to go to see some of these spectacular scenes. Incidentally, I find it hard to believe that some of the “garden” shots were not taken in the wild.

The chapter on “Organizing Your Garden” discusses the traditional elements of landscape design—plant color, form, and texture. Useful ideas and photographs are presented that stress the importance of using these elements carefully. A great deal is made of selecting and utilizing functional masses—the trees, shrubs, and herbs used in varying compositions depending upon the type of wild garden being designed.

“Wild-Garden Amenities” discusses how to design gardens to attract wildlife, including birds, insects, mammals, and reptiles. Austin presents brief notes on which plants will likely attract which animals; these seem quite accurate, although the suggestion that poplar, ash, and elm will attract butterflies is debatable. This chapter finishes with discussions of the use of rocks, stones, and tree stumps in the wild garden.

The Appendix is composed of several lists and should have been one of the highlights of the book. Unfortunately, the lists are often inaccurate or incomplete. The first list,

“Where to Visit Wild Gardens,” is an excellent idea, but two of the best known and finest wildflower gardens in the country—the Garden in the Woods in Framingham, Massachusetts, and the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill—are left out. The list of native plant societies contains fewer than half of the societies that exist. And, the list of suppliers of wild-garden materials misses some important suppliers, especially those specializing in propagated, as opposed to collected, material.

Wild Gardening concludes with a series of tables covering regional wildflower mixes and, finally, an “Individual Wild-Flower Species List.” It is encouraging to note that commonly attempted but nearly always ill-fated plants such as the lady’s-slipper orchids (*Cypripedium*) are lacking from these lists. But, other plants do show up on the list for unknown reasons—*Achillea filipendula* (from Asia Minor), *A. millefolium* (a Eurasian weed), *Cheiranthus cheiri* (from southern Europe), *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* (a Eurasian weed), *Dimorphotheca aurantiaca* (from South Africa), *Gypsophila elegans* (from the Ukraine to Iran), *Lobularia maritima* (from southern Europe), *Papaver rhoeas* (naturalized from Eurasia), *Thunbergia alata* (from tropical Africa), etc. The book seems to suffer from an identity crisis—does it deal with native plants or with wildflower gardening? The subtitle, *Strategies and Procedures Using Native Plantings*, indicates the former, but the plants in the lists suggest the latter.

This small book is beautiful to look at—it contains many exceptional photographs which are printed well, and its design is elegant. In spite of its visual appeal, however, I found it lacking in substance.

Thailand Tropical Jungle Plants: edible and medicinal wild plants of Southern Thailand. All Paddle Asia tours are educational. Here are just a few of the many wild edible plants we encounter on our jungle survival tours in Khao Sok National Park and Phang Nga Province. The tropical jungle in Thailand offer a wide array of useful edible and medicinal plants. Rural villagers still utilize this bounty. Here is a brief selection of the many plants available. Fishtail Palm. Wild edible plants are everywhere you turn. Not only it is free food, but eating wild plants is a huge stride toward wilderness self-sufficiency. Once you know where to look and how to prepare plants you find in the wild, you'll be well prepared whether you're planning on surviving on free greens or you just want to try some new flavors next time you go camping. Be careful, though: eating the wrong plant could be fatal. Steps Download Article. PRO. Wild Apple - This discolored, bumpy apple was unaffected inside - crisp, sweet and delicious. Some apples contain larvae, wrongly called "worms" - really immature insects. The plant is so primitive - dating back to the time of the dinosaurs - that male and female flowers are separate on the stiff, two-parted flower head: the pollen-producing male is always on top, while the seed-bearing female is forever relegated to the bottom. Clearly, this species evolved long before the Sexual Revolution.