

## Recommendations for Your Gardening Library

### The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Seed Saving

Edited by Lee Buttala and Shanyng Siegel. Seed Savers Exchange, Inc., Decorah, IA, 2015. 390 pages. Publisher's price: \$29.95.

NEWS OF A likely merger of Dow Chemical and DuPont, titans of agrochemicals and genetically modified crops, makes *The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Seed Saving*—published by the Seed Savers Exchange (SSE), the best-known seed-conservation organization in the United States—especially timely.

Any home gardener who saves non-hybrid seeds is already helping preserve the genetic heritage of open-pollinated varieties. Many of the varieties are generations old, each carrying stories of those who grew them, saved them, and passed them

on. Saving seeds for a few crops is pretty straightforward, but much more is required to ensure that the seeds you save are both viable and grow true-to-type. That's where this book comes in.

The book is divided into two sections. The first explores general plant botany—including propagation, genetic diversity, and life cycles—and provides an overview of harvesting, cleaning, and storing seeds. "Master Class" features delve into more specialized topics, such as genotypes and hand-pollination techniques.

The second section consists of crop profiles, which are arranged alphabetically by scientific name. Here you'll find the nitty-gritty of seed conservation. This includes information about flowering, pollination, and seed set; guidelines for variety maintenance and harvesting; and directions for cleaning and storing seeds.

Each entry delineates the different types within the category: for example, the genus *Cucurbita* is divided into winter squash, pumpkin, summer squash, and gourd. A helpful box highlights crop specifics such as plant family, life cycle, special requirements, flower type, isolation distances, numbers of plants needed for genetic preservation, expected seed life, and more.

One caveat: as the subtitle notes, this book is about how to harvest and save seeds, not how to grow plants. Gardeners seeking information about the best soil pH for cabbage or how to trellis cucumbers will need to look elsewhere. For gardeners who want to bank seeds for next year's garden—and help bank everyone's genetic heritage—*The Seed Garden* is exactly the book to have.

—Karan Davis Cutler

Based in Vermont, Karan Davis Cutler is the author of *The Complete Vegetable & Herb Gardener*, *The New England Gardener's Book of Lists*, and several other books.

### Rescuing Eden: Preserving America's Historic Gardens.

Curtice Taylor and Caroline Seebohm. The Monacelli Press, New York, NY, 2015. 216 pages. Publisher's price: \$50.

AMERICA MAY be young compared to England, Japan, and other countries with a rich and storied garden heritage, but its own horticultural masterpieces are no less spectacular. Unfortunately, many of these treasures on private property have vanished over time or are under threat as current owners move on. Through Curtice Taylor's photographs and Caroline Seebohm's words, *Rescuing Eden* spotlights some of the gardens that were nearly lost forever before someone stepped forward to save them.

This book explores 30 such gardens from California to Maine. All of them now are open to the public, thanks to the organizations and volunteers who have preserved in these gardens a bit of America's landscape and cultural heritage.

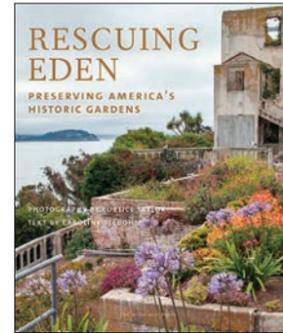
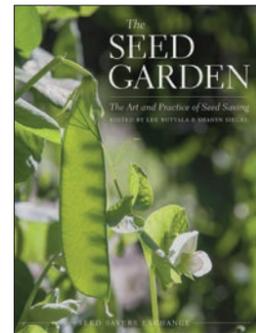
The illustrations of each garden take center stage in the layout of the book. Taylor provides fine detail in his photographs of plants, garden accessories, stone, water, and pathways at each particular site. Seebohm in turn gives context to the images. She writes simply and clearly about the history and current status of each garden. The gardens themselves are fascinating, but I also enjoyed learning about the people who originally created them.

The properties are grouped by time period, from the 1740s to the 1990s, and represent different garden styles that typically reflect the era of their creation. For example, South Carolina's Middleton Place, which the book calls "the oldest surviving landscaped garden in North America," is an 18th-century homage to the grand English and French estates of that time period, complete with extensive lawns. Madoo on Long Island, designed by artist Robert Dash beginning in 1967, provides a more contemporary experience, with a series of garden rooms filled with vivid colors that make the small spaces feel much larger.

Not every exceptional private garden had a champion, so this book will leave you grateful for the ones that have been preserved. Judging by the few of these gardens that I have visited, they are places worth experiencing, both in this book and in person.

—Thomas J. Mickey

Thomas J. Mickey is the author of *America's Romance with the English Garden* (Ohio University Press, 2013) and blogs about horticultural history at [www.americangardening.net](http://www.americangardening.net).



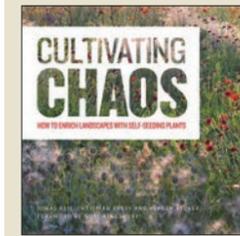
## GARDENER'S BOOKS

### Going Wild in the Garden

PERHAPS YOU are thinking of creating a meadow across several acres or adding spontaneity to a container garden. Nature may be your best guide, especially if you take cues from your local wild landscapes. The following books also can help, offering inspiring examples and tips for going wild in your own garden.

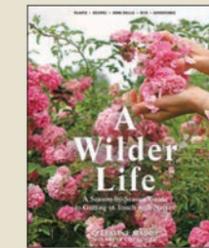
—Benjamin Whitacre, Editorial Intern

The only constant in a self-seeding garden is change, according to the authors of *Cultivating Chaos: How to Enrich Landscapes with Self-Seeding Plants* (Timber Press, 2015, \$40). Through case



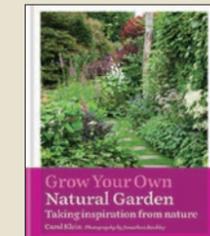
studies of gardens across Europe and North America, Jonas Reif and Christian Kress make a compelling argument for gardens with autonomy. Their in-depth practical advice and lists of ideal plants may inspire even the most skeptical readers to include a few chaotic specimens in their planting plans.

Part manifesto for millennials, part garden guide, *A Wilder Life: A Season-by-Season Guide to Getting in Touch with Nature* (Artisan, 2016, \$29.95), discusses how to stay connected with nature



through gardening and related activities. Celestine Maddy and Abbye Churchill from the quarterly magazine *Wilder* address topics on everything from creating natural dyes from plants to using herbs in healing and for cooking. Sections are divided by season, so the book can serve as a year-round guide for what to do and when to do it.

*Grow Your Own Natural Garden: Taking Inspiration from Nature* (Mitchell Beazley, 2015, \$34.99), by Carol Klein, espouses a landscape where the gardener works with nature rather than



against it. Chapters on various ecosystems such as woodlands, seashores, and wetlands discuss how to harness the natural affinities between plants and the environments. The book marries the best of practical how-to guides with the best of coffee-table beauties, creating a reading experience that often feels like a lively tour of unbelievable gardens.

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