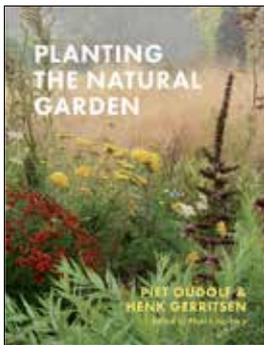


Recommendations for Your Gardening Library

Planting the Natural Garden

Piet Oudolf and Henk Gerritsen. Timber Press, Portland, OR. 288 pages. Publisher's Price, hardcover: \$35.

THIS TIMELY update on the original classic *Droomplanten* ("Dream Plants") published in 1990 checks the boxes for both inspiration and education.



I've long admired Piet Oudolf's projects, including Lurie Garden in Millennium Park in Chicago and the High Line in Manhattan. As an internationally known garden designer and plantsman, Oudolf has led the revolution on how perennials are understood, used, and valued in the landscape year round. Henk Gerritsen (1948–2008), an ecological activist, artist and garden designer, had a lasting relationship with

Oudolf and was also a proponent of appreciating the textural and color contributions of perennials "out of flowering." Gerritsen's engaging writing, virtually unchanged from the original, offers timeless promotion and appreciation of perennials in the garden with equal parts inspiration, blunt assessments, humor, and dry wit: "A garden in which there are no light and airy plants is not only lacking in romance, it is extremely uninteresting and, therefore, off-putting."

I enjoyed reading through this resource as it flowed from myriad plant descriptions with photos to suggestions for uses and finally, some wonderful plans and practical combinations. Noel Kingsbury, editor, provides an excellent introduction that pays homage to the original classic while also serving to describe the improvements to this edition.

Additionally, I found *Planting the Natural Garden* to be smartly arranged and the expanded and updated inclusion of new plants and removal of outdated selections is noticeable and impactful. It was nice to see some of my favorite newer perennials like *Baptisia* 'Lunar Eclipse' and *Vernonia* 'Summer Surrender', as well as the increased number of ornamental grasses. As with the earlier edition, there is a strong focus on reliable, low-maintenance selections with many examples of combinations that will work for lengthy color display and extended structure in the garden.

I did find myself wishing to see more plant photography in the plant directory selection along with USDA Hardiness Zone indications. However, these minor criticisms don't minimize the inherent value of this engaging and updated reference for designers, gardeners, and plant lovers alike!

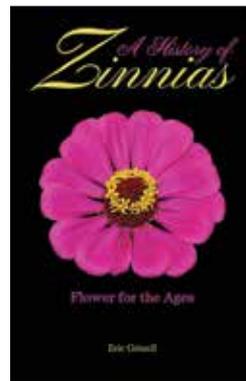
—Mark Dwyer

Mark Dwyer is owner of *Landscape Prescriptions by MD* (www.landscapereccriptionsmd.com).

A History of Zinnias: Flower for the Ages

Eric Grissell. Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, IN. 286 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$27.99.

THIS SPRING, like many other gardeners, I planted zinnia seeds to enhance my summer garden. Tall red ones, to be exact. Admittedly, I always have taken zinnias for granted. Who knew their history was so complicated and colorful?



Eric Grissell explores the evolution and history of the zinnia, debunking myths and uncovering little-known facts about the plant's movement into gardens, in his very erudite book *A History of Zinnias: Flower for the Ages*. It is a true detective story, first examining ancient Aztec- and Mayan-era literature for clues and moving on to almost exhaustive research into Amer-

ican and European sources. Among other things, Grissell covers the introduction of the various zinnia species into cultivation and the breeding efforts over the last two centuries that have resulted in the iconic flower that everyone recognizes and loves today.

Grissell maintains our attention by injecting wit and interesting associations into his narrative. We learn, for example, that an unfortunately short-lived British warship was called the H.M.S. Zinnia. Vincent van Gogh and Mary Cassatt famously painted zinnias. And then there was the fleeting "Order of the Zinnia" founded by a member of the Art Students League in New York in 1890, which promoted the flower as the "emblem of perpetual maidenhood." In modern times, did a zinnia actually bloom in the International Space Station? Eric Grissell states the answer.

Zinnia breeding and seed production has been a competitive activity in the nursery industry for many decades. Flower color, size, and form, strong tall stems, dwarf stems, quilled petals, variegation in flowers and foliage, disease resistance, and uniformity of habit are among the traits considered by various international seed companies. Grissell did his homework, surveying several thousand seed catalogs in his research and citing influential individuals and companies who made significant introductions into the zinnia world.

Today, many are aware of the need for flowers that function both aesthetically as well as being good nectar and pollen sources for pollinators. The zinnia once again scores! All in all, Grissell provides extensive historical and contemporary evidence that zinnias deservedly are among the most loved flowers available to gardeners. ♪

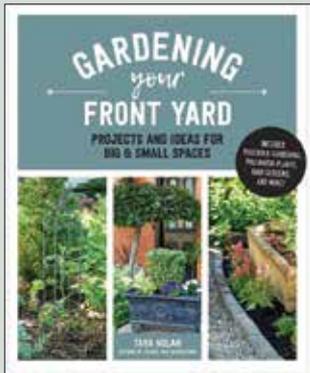
—Denise Wiles Adams

Denise Wiles Adams is a plant and garden historian who grows heirloom plants in her Arts & Crafts-style gardens in Stony Point, New York.

GARDENER'S BOOKS: PROJECTS AND TECHNIQUES

WITH REKINDLED interest in gardening sweeping the country, these two new books offer a great place to start for beginners and myriad ideas for those with more experience. Dust off the tools and update your landscape with a host of straightforward projects to add beauty and incorporate edibles. Whether you are new to gardening or a veteran interested in a refresher course, understanding basic planting and gardening techniques can help create a rewarding garden with fewer missteps.

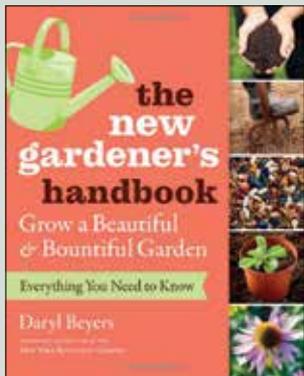
Gardening Your Front Yard: Projects and Ideas for Big & Small Spaces (Cool Springs Press, \$30) Discover a wealth of DIY projects from author Tara Nolan that can transform and enhance your front yard spaces.



Packed with ideas and inspiration, there's something for everyone. From adding a front yard patio to growing edibles in tight spaces, Nolan also tackles eco-friendly projects like rain gardens, rain barrels, and pollinator gardens. Find plant lists and plans for flower gardening in beds, raised

planters, and containers and solutions for problems such as slopes, excessive noise, and lack of privacy. Plans are crisp, clear and easy to follow. If you're looking to transform your front garden, this is a valuable resource.

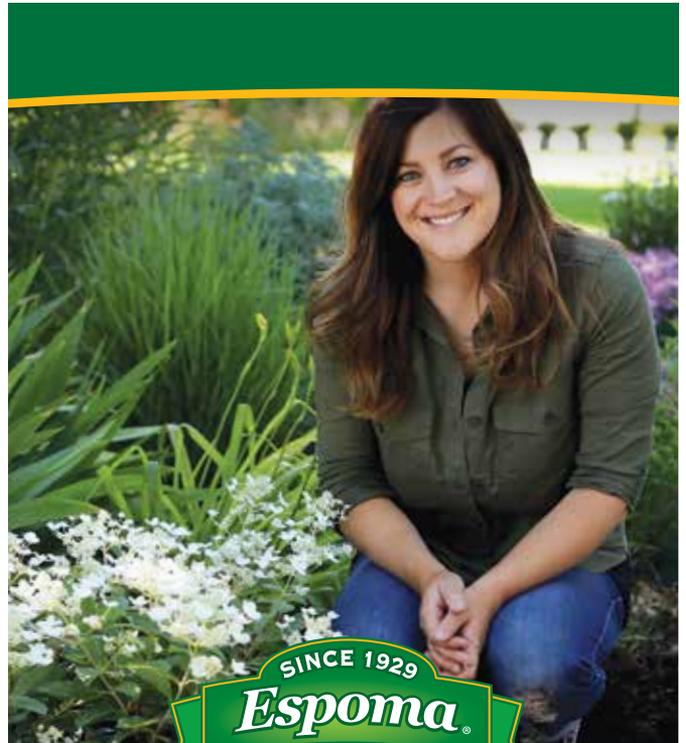
The New Gardener's Handbook: Grow a Beautiful & Bountiful Garden (Timber Press, \$24.95) This is a thorough, solid first guide to gardening from author Daryl Beyers, gardening instructor at the New York Botanical Garden.



He covers everything from the basics of botany and soils to seeds, planting, watering, propagation, pruning, weeds, and more. With plain language and detailed illustrations, this is an excellent place to dive into the rewarding world of gardening. Learn how to plant and tend both ornamental and edible

plants, shrubs, and trees. Find out how plants work for best success in your gardening endeavors.

—Heather Prince, Associate Editor



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Laura LeBoutillier grew up working in her parents' garden center. Since then, she and her husband Aaron have published hundreds of inspirational and educational gardening videos online for over 2.4 million loyal fans. Laura loves her garden and uses only the best products to ensure it looks beautiful. That's why she trusts Espoma Organic® for her fertilizer and potting soil needs.

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