FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Gardening

Decoding Gardening Advice: The Science Behind the 100 Most Common Recommednations

Jeff Gillman
Meleah Maynard
Timber Press
978-1-60469-220-4
(November 30, 2011)

Have you ever wondered if you could successfully fertilize your garden with urine? Me neither. In their smart and cheeky new guide, Jeff Gillman and Meleah Maynard—an associate professor of horticulture and a master gardener, respectively—use science and field experience to debunk or support such conventional wisdom.

As gardeners know, everyone has well-meaning—and often contradictory—advice to address common problems. While there's an abundance of solutions, there's also a lack of understanding as to why they might or might not work. After Gillman and Maynard were asked the same questions again and again, they realized that they needed to conduct intensive research to scientifically and definitively answer questions like "Should I use compost tea?"

Their recommendations fall into three categories—Good Advice, Advice That's Debatable, and Advice That's Just Wrong—in concise sections running the gamut from lawns and shrubs to vegetables, pest control, mulching, and soil amendments. Surprisingly, compost tea—a staple in many boutique garden stores—falls into the "That's Just Wrong" territory, suggesting, as it does, potential E. coli concerns. Refuting common wisdom is a favorite pastime in this book, and the authors do so gleefully, with ample science to back up their findings. *Decoding Gardening Advice* advocates using thought before applying any type of chemical or amendment to a garden and maintains that often natural remedies are best. Though there's some truth to the old adage, "Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home …," releasing ladybugs is apparently of doubtful value.

Gillman and Maynard also provide a bottom line, The Real Dirt, and their own opinions on each question. These amusing asides sound like the words of a kindly aunt giving you her hard-won insights and secrets to success. Following *Decoding Gardening Advice*, veteran

gardeners and newly inspired green thumbs alike will learn to question what they're told before they create the vegetable garden, orchard, or suburban lawn of their dreams.

Courtney Sorrell