FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Gardener's Atlas: The Origins Discovery and Cultivation of the World's Most Popular Garden Plants

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In the year 1700, garden architect and designer Andre Le N'tre visited his masterwork, Versailles, for the last time. While he and King Louis XIV were wheeled slowly down the grand avenues in special chairs, it may have seemed to them like the autumn of their civilization-but it was really only spring and every science was in the process of transformation or bloom. Alchemy became chemistry, Bougainville discovered Tahiti and free love, and in 1769, Captain James Cook launched his first voyage aboard the ship Endeavor to view the transit of Venus from the Tahitian latitudes which would then reveal the true distance from the Earth to the sun.

On board Cook's ship was a young botanist by the name of Sir Joseph Banks. When the Endeavor ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef, Banks went plant-hunting for six weeks and discovered the eucalyptus. Upon his return to England, he became president of the London Royal Society as well as curator of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, now the most important botanical reference collection in the world with over five million specimens. Another of his outstanding contributions was the negotiation in China for the tree peony, which was only grown in the garden of the emperor and his mandarins.

In 1776, Cook made his third voyage while the United States was choosing its name and its destiny. Cook's young sailing master's name was William Bligh. Ten years later, Sir Joseph Banks personally chose Bligh to captain a breadfruit-gathering mission to Tahiti. The ship was purchased and named; they called her the Bounty. Bougainville and Cook's legacy in Tahiti was venereal disease, Bligh's legacy is cinematic.

What a century of adventure and discovery! Revolution, sex, mutiny… and botany. Botany may appear to us to be a most serene of pursuits, but Grimshaw, in this fascinating and beautiful volume, The Gardener's Atlas, demonstrates that botany was once an active science, requiring the skills of lion-tamer as well as diplomat. He also relates that botanists and horticulturists have come from all walks of life, monk to thief, and that the science has always

been the domain of both men and women. Queen Hatsheput of Egypt sent out the first mission of plant-hunters to the Land of Punt in 1495, B.C. At about that same time, Native Americans in the Southwest were exporting their hybrid invention, the sunflower, to the Aztecs. Ogier Ghiselin de Busbacq, ambassador from the Holy Roman Emperor to Suleiman the Magnificent in Constantinople sent back tulips to his native Vienna in the late 1500s. John Tradescant the Elder brought back the lilac and jasmine from Asia in 1621. And Gertrude Jekyll revolutionized gardening around the world in the late 1800s and early 1900s with her use of informality, lavishness and color theory.

The Gardener's Atlas is divided into chapters according to plant families, some of which in themselves are startling. Roses, cherries and apples, for example, all share a genealogy. Within each chapter, Grimshaw includes maps describing how and when certain plants spread around the globe, personalities in the world of botany and horticulture, and the origin of some of our more quotidian flower names. The hollyhock, for instance, came to Europe from the Near East during the Crusades. Soldiers added the word "holy" to hoc, which is the Anglo-saxon word for mallow, the flower's family name. Sir Walter Raleigh, an infamous personality of literature, politics and romance was also one of the first tobacco smokers in Europe. His ideas and bad habits made him an enemy of King James I, who consequently wrote the first non-smoking pamphlet called, poignantly, A Counterblast to Tobacco. Raleigh, who was finally executed by the king, may have been the originator of smoking after sex, the One Last Smoke, and special prosecutors. Meanwhile, the Jesuits in South America found the passion flower and used its anatomy to explain their religious teachings, while the wisteria vine shows a particular political bent: In Japan, it twines in a counterclockwise fashion, and in China, the reverse!

The Gardener's Atlas is exceptional for its articulate, detailed, and lively writing, its handsome layout and illustrations and its careful choice of material. Readers not usually drawn to scientific volumes will find Grimshaw's work fascinating as well as beautiful. The book is masterfully organized and there are many text-related insets dealing with biographies, plant disbursement, botany and garden design through the ages. This is an excellent example of how a book can be visually stimulating without having to be an interactive CD. Dr. Grimshaw also includes descriptions of the original growing conditions of many plants and their culture in a modern, temperate garden.

Chevalier Soulange-Bodin wrote in 1819 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, “The rising taste for gardening becomes one of the most agreeable guarantees of the repose of the world.” If only this was true. The Gardener’s Atlas reminds us that the scarlet poppies that self-seed in our gardens gained their fame when they sprang up on the French battlefields after WWII. Our ubiquitous ditch lilies are a gift from China and Japan. And Islam gave us the world’s first garden as well as the word for it, pairidaeza, or ‘paradise’. (November)

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