

Great English Gardens

Andrew Lawson

Jane Taylor

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The extraordinary element of this new book by Lawson and Taylor is the photography. The photos are grand and yet detailed, breathtaking as well as intimate, of the panoramic and secretive. They are so wonderful, in fact, that they completely overwhelm the text.

Part of the distraction comes from the text's often irrelevance to the photos with which it shares page-space. It was almost as if the text was written originally as a kind of manual or thesis, and the photos were added later. Also, the text often skips two or three pages, which again, between studying the photos and reading the captions, was so distracting and absorbing that the text was simply beside the point.

Nevertheless, Taylor, who was Deputy General Secretary of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens in the UK, writes with authority and enthusiasm. She begins the book with an overview of some major personality influences in British gardening and continues with two interesting chapters of design history. The rest of the book is dedicated to the different genres of gardening: perennial borders, water gardens, roses, kitchen gardens, etc.

The text and illustrations depict examples of both the grandiose and the cottage. Also worth mentioning are the captions to the photos: they are detailed, interesting and highly readable.

Great English Gardens is a beautiful book, a book that I am pleased to have as part of my working library. This is not another blurry, garden-mood book, but a real pictorial manual useful to gardeners with gardens both large and small.

H. SHAW CAUCHY (January / February 1999)

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